

ADULT LEADER

BERKELEY BAPTIST
DIVINITY SCHOOL
*A Journal of Christian Education
and Church Work*

MAY, 1937

Vol. XIII No. 5

*Saint Augustine
and His Mother*



Ary Scheffer

The American Baptist Publication Society

1701-1703 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.



TIME TO PLAN FOR

The Vacation Church School

WHAT DO YOU NEED ?

Courses of Study
Bibles
Reference Books
Helps in Planning
Invitation Cards

Record Cards
Pictures
Handcraft Materials
Flags
Maps

Whatever it may be, The American Baptist Publication Society carries a full line of supplies. Send for the free leaflet of "Textbooks and Supplies for the Vacation and Week-Day Schools," and our supply catalog, "The Church and Sunday School Builder."

THE AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

• 1701-1703 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

16 Ashburton Place, Boston
1107 McGee Street, Kansas City

72 E. Randolph Street, Chicago
505 Washington Mutual Bldg., Seattle

313 W. Third Street, Los Angeles
223 Church Street, Toronto

Send Your Order to Our Nearest Branch

ADULT LEADER

Vol. XIII

MAY, 1937

No. 5

MILES W. SMITH
Editor-in-Chief Sunday School Publications
MITCHELL BRONK
Editor of ADULT LEADER

Published Monthly by
THE AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY
(THE JUDSON PRESS)

OWEN C. BROWN, Executive Secretary
ELVIN L. RUTH, Treasurer
HARVEY E. CRESSMAN, Business Manager

1701-1703 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Boston Chicago Los Angeles
Kansas City Seattle Toronto

PRICES: Single copy, \$1.00 per year; in quantities, 20 cents per quarter, 80 cents per year.

Entered as second-class matter December 7, 1917, at the post-office at Philadelphia, Pa., under Act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 3, 1918.

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
EDITORIALS	129
TWO POEMS. <i>Carmen Malone</i>	130
ABRAHAM, A MAN OF FAITH. <i>John Snape, D. D.</i>	131
ARE THESE THINGS RELIGIOUS? <i>James Myers</i>	133
WORKING WITH ADULTS IN THE RURAL CHURCH. <i>William C. Arbo.</i>	135
THE TEACHER MEETS HIMSELF. <i>W. G. Montgomery</i>	137
LEARNING FOR LIFE; THE NEW ADULT PROGRAM. <i>O. G. Herbrecht</i>	139
ADULT CONFERENCE AT LAKE GENEVA	140
RECENT BOOKS	141
HUMOR, OLD AND NEW	141
INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS	142
ORDER OF WORSHIP	160

Mothers' Day

The idea of this observance originated with Miss Anna Jarvis, of Philadelphia. In 1914 Congress authorized the President to designate, by annual proclamation, the second Sunday in May as Mothers' Day. The purpose of the observance has been stated to be: "To recall memories of the mothers who have gone; to brighten the lives of those who remain; and to encourage men, women and children to honor home and parents."

Augustine and Monica

From Paul to Luther, the most imposing figure in church history is undoubtedly Augustine, to whom all confessions accord the name "Saint." Now from this ecclesiastical and theological giant's greatness it is impossible to separate his mother, Monica. It is not alone that her persistent faith made him a Christian and her ambition for him made him the greatest

churchman of post-apostolic times, but in affection and in their common devotion to Christ there was a closeness, an intimacy, that the ages since have wondered at. Indeed, the supreme moment of Augustine's religious experience he shared with Monica, that memorable day when hand in hand they "were sitting by a window that looked over a garden and were talking of the purity of life with God." (See cover picture.)

A Mother's Faith

It is another story of Timothy and Eunice. Patricius, Augustine's father, had refused to abandon paganism; Monica's family, however, had been firm-rooted in Christianity for generations—and the mother's faith won out, as it always does when it is true mother faith. Even when as a youth her son went astray, into ways of the flesh and the world, her confidence persisted. Harnack said that Monica's fight for her son's soul is the most splendid on record. Rebecca West comments: "Such a woman could afford to wait. The son of such a woman could afford to wander, knowing he would be brought home at last." In telling him of her dream, Monica said to Augustine: "No, it was not told me that thou art where He is, but where thou art there is He."

If They, Then Why Not We?

During the World War there were a few at least of the people we term "conscientious objectors" who were willing to go to prison rather than admit the justice of that or any other war. In various countries even now there are persons who are enduring imprisonment and other severe penalties, and suffering for the sake of political or economic principles that to us seem more or less academic. We may not admire these persons, may think them foolish, or strange fanatics, but I am wondering if they should not put a good many of us Christians to shame; if they should not set us to thinking. Would we endure as much for the sake of our Christian principles? In the past many have. Church history is full of it. But would we? God grant that we shan't have to—but would we?

How Precious Is Our Faith?

Are not our Christian principles and our faith as important to us and as precious as the theories of the Socialists, the Communists, the political revolutionists, or the protagonists of this and that? The men and women who endure no end of discomfort and deprivation in a labor strike to gain material advantage, have they not something to say to us of Christ's following? To those of us who begrudge our cause—Christ's—the little we do to assist it, or the paltry moneys we give to further it?

Letting George Do It—In the Kingdom's Support

In his sermon the other Sunday my pastor made effective use of the thought that if you do not contribute to the church's support your honest part you are really unloading it upon others, who possibly are not so well able to give as you are; at any rate, not able to bear this unfair, double burden, for you are thus making them do your share, give for you. It applies to churches as well as individuals. There should always be an apportionment. Now apportionments are not arbitrary, and not fixed by denominational officers and boards; they are natural, that is, figured out and fixed by God.

Disproportionate Giving

The "small," "poor" church that is giving disproportionately may not be complaining, may be one of those churches that the Lord loves because it is a cheerful giver—only it isn't fair. Such churches are being meanly treated by the "large," "rich" churches of their denominational group. If you, possessed of abundant means, dine in a restaurant with a friend who is in straitened circumstances, you would be ashamed brazenly to let him pay the check. Do some Christians and some churches lack shame?

Vicarious Stewardship

Allusion has been made to the examples of sturdy born faith that are the glory of church history. Is it possible that we like to read of them to relieve our consciences—of the obligation we feel resting on us like a heavy yoke—wise to be "hard" for our faith, or to do something that costs for Christ's sake? The fascinating story of a sacrificial missionary endeavor that so many of us like to read—is it to us just a show, or does it, as it should, inspire us or shame us into similar bearing and enduring for our Saviour here in the homeland—and in our local churches?

The Testimony of Our Dollars

In Dr. Whitney S. K. Yeaple's recently published volume of The Judson Press Sermons, *Your Money and Your Life*, there is a sentence that one does not overlook and does not forget, "Great givers always live gloriously." Doctor Yeaple is speaking of "Church Dollars," and has just said: "These dollars clearly indicate a member's appraisal of the value of his church-membership, his recognition of the privileges and obligations of stewardship, and his growth in understanding the mind of Christ about a glorious way of living, here and now."

TWO POEMS

By Carmen Malone, Springtown, Texas

I

A MOTHERS' DAY GIFT

"If you could have just anything
You wanted on this day,
What would you ask for, mother dear?"
I thought that she would say
A bag of candied fruit, or else
A long-stemmed crimson rose,
Because my coins are but few
And very well she knows.

But she gazed thoughtfully at me:
"The thing I would like best
Is just to know you will be strong
When life will give you test.
I want you honest, want you kind,
I want you brave and true.
Resolve to have such traits—and that
Will be my gift from you."

II

A MOTHERS' DAY PRAYER

I thank thee for my mother, Lord,
I thank thee for her tenderness,
Her sympathy, her gentleness;
And I would ask that thou wouldst bless
Her on this day—this Mothers' Day—
And on the days that are to come,
That she shall find what happiness
What peace and sweet content may sum.

And make me worthy of her, Lord.
Let me accept the many gifts
Her heart, her lips, her hands bestow—
The homely moral soul uplifts—
With firm resolve that I shall work
To make her proud of me some day.
Lord, bless her for her tender care
And make me worthy—this I pray.

Abraham, a Man of Faith

By JOHN SNAPE, D. D., Los Angeles, California

"Here is the last great certainty. Be sure of God! By simple, loving worship, by purifying yourself even as he is pure, by continual moral obedience, creep close to him, keep close to him. Be sure of God, and in the end nothing can overthrow you."

Thus Phillips Brooks once spoke to the men of Harvard University, and what he said in that early day to the men of Harvard he would say today, if he were here, to business men, and politicians, and statesmen (if he could find any), and judges, and lawyers, and preachers, and teachers—to all men everywhere: "Be sure of God!"

"Trust in the Lord and do good. So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Thus once said a greater man than Phillips Brooks, even the sweet singer of Israel. And he was saying, as Charles R. Brown has pointed out, that about all a man needs in the way of his relation to God, to other individuals and to human society is wrapped up in these words.

Here are four things: (1) Religious faith—"trust in the Lord"; (2) Humane service—"and do good"; (3) Political stability—"so shalt thou dwell in the land"; (4) Economic stability—"and verily thou shalt be fed."

It is a message for this hour—this disturbed hour, this tremendous hour, this hour of conflicting opinions and clashing arguments and crashing fortunes and diminishing faith. Be sure of God!

Faith as a doctrine, specifically set forth, is not often referred to in the Old Testament, and yet Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham are the finest examples of the faith that found illumination and immortalization in the roll-call of faith given in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews—the reading of which has been the inspiration of the saints of every age.

Faith is firm belief, on probable evidence, in regard to important truth. As Coleridge puts it, "the fealty of the finite will and understanding to the reason." Faith is fidelity to promise, a synonym for loyalty to duty. Faith is honor pledged, as when we say, "He violated his plighted faith." In "Elaine" Tennyson says, as you remember, of Lancelot, when referring to his sinful relations to Arthur's queen:

"His honor, rooted in dishonor stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true"

—which are two of the finest lines found in anybody's poetry.

Faith may also be defined as a system of religious belief, as when we speak of the Jewish faith, the

Mohammedan faith, the Roman Catholic faith, the Christian faith.

Theologians divide faith into four kinds: historical faith, temporary faith, faith of miracles, saving faith. Historical faith may be the faith of laggards and demons (demons also believe and tremble). Temporary faith is that kind of which the Saviour speaks in his parable of the Sower, referring to those who received the word with joy, and in time of temptation fell away. Faith of miracles is the assent of the mind concerning the specific promise of any miraculous event. Saving faith is that faith which appropriates the atonement, receives Christ as he is revealed in the gospel, and relies upon him for salvation.

Faith has many companion graces; it is not a lonely grace. Faith and repentance go together (Acts 20: 20); faith and love go together (1 Thess. 5: 8); faith and purity go together (1 Tim. 4: 12); faith and patience go together (James 1: 3); faith and hope go together (1 Cor. 13: 13); faith and works go together (James 2: 17); faith and eight other virtues go together (Gal. 5: 22, 23).

Faith is trust based on reason. There is a kind of faith that may be called a natural faith. The kind of faith a merchant has in a bank when he makes a deposit; the kind of faith a wife places in a husband when she trusts him to mail a letter; the faith a traveler has in a railroad when he takes a seat in a Pullman and entrusts himself to the engineer, the conductor, the porter, the foreman, fireman, the powermen, the switchmen and the telegraph-operators along the tracks; the faith existing between wife and husband, child and parent; the faith we exhibit when we eat hash in a restaurant; faith that might be called a natural faith.

Faith is belief placed above reason. Faith follows intuition, and reason often follows it. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. He offered up his only son. The New Testament puts it in the past tense. If a modern Abraham were to do a thing like that the sheriff would get him. Rahab secreted the spies. They were enemies of her own country, and the act, on the face of it, was unpatriotic (Edith Cavell was put to death for the same thing), but the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of it as an act of faith. Jesus came to this earth and gathered his apostles about him, and established his Kingdom. "He endured as seeing him who is invisible." That was faith.

Faith is spiritual apprehension of invisible things. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see

death; but he saw God, and before his translation had the testimony that he pleased God. By faith Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, but seeking a city whose builder and maker was God. By faith Moses preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin with the Egyptians. By faith Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthæ and David subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens. By faith Henry Drummond, when he lay dying, saved his best stories for his best friends, and comforted them when they came in to comfort him. By faith John Bright said: "If we can't win as fast as we wish, we know that our opponents, in the long run, can't win at all." By faith Gladstone, when the liberal cause was temporarily defeated, rose undaunted in Parliament, and exclaimed, "I appeal to time!" By faith Haeckel, the great biologist, said, "Scientific faith fills the gaps in our knowledge of natural laws with temporary hypotheses." By faith Lincoln said, "Let us have faith that right makes might; and in that faith, let us dare to do our duty." By faith Robert Louis Stevenson when dying wrote, "Whether on the first of January, or the thirty-first of December, faith is a good word to end on." By faith Ole Bull, after his "A" string snapped, while playing at a Munich concert, finished the composition on three strings. Yes, that is faith—making music out of life's remainders, after the break has come! By faith George Matheson, groping on the threshold of impending blindness, wrote his best hymn, "O love, that wilt not let me go." By faith Donald Hankey, who died in the trenches in France, exclaimed, "True religion is betting one's life that there is a God."

We need faith in ourselves. When a young man comes to me and says that his trouble is that he thinks too much of himself, I always say to him: "My trouble is with young people who do not think enough of themselves. Do not think less of yourself, but think more. Keep your conceit—but sanctify it."

We need faith in our generation; faith in our nation; faith in the world. Faith, and faith alone will save the world from another war. Who won the last war? How could anybody win a war that cost the world \$195,000,000,000 and 7,582,300 lives? War never proves which nation is wrong; it proves only which nation is strong.

Faith justifies (Rom. 5:1); *purifies* (Acts 15:9); *inspires*. The greatest comment ever made about the discovery of America by Columbus was made by one of his own countrymen, "The instinct of an unknown continent burned within him."

A modern newspaper has said: "Plenty of people do the possible; you can hire them for forty dollars

a month; the prizes are for those who perform the impossible. If a thing can be done, experience and skill can do it; if a thing can't be done, only faith can do it."

Say It with Flowers

A new and solemn version of "Say It with Flowers" was enacted at the farewell meeting of Missionary Antonio Mauricio just before he left Brazil to return to his field in Portugal. The Brazilian Baptists have maintained work in their mother country for many years and since 1920 the Mauricios have been the permanent workers in this difficult but promising field.

Mauricio has spent nearly a year in Brazil recently visiting the churches in the interest of Foreign Missions, and wherever he went he not only preached missions but also carried the message of salvation, that many souls were brought to Christ through his ministry in Brazil.

At this farewell meeting, which was held in the First Church in Rio, a large audience had gathered. Naturally the majority were church-members, but there were also present many unsaved. In the course of the services there were presented to Mauricio several beautiful bouquets. One was a sheaf of pink carnations, given him by a group of students. When it came his turn to speak he made suitable acknowledgments, then made his last appeal to the unsaved. He asked all who wanted salvation to come to the front and each receive a carnation. The flower was to be kept until the recipient decided for Christ, then to be sent to Mauricio, who himself would keep one carnation and one rosebud to remind him to pray daily for these who were longing to find the true way. Every carnation was taken, sixty or more. We know of two that have been returned already. Will you not pray that they may all find their way across the sea, to send to the anxious heart of God's servant, "We have accepted the Saviour you preached; we have found joy in the only Name whereby we may be saved"—Ruth M. Randall, in "The Baptist New Mexican"

Atmosphere

Atmosphere cannot be seen, but it is certainly felt. The physical factors have something to do with it. The spiritual tone enters in and social attitudes greatly affect it. It is really important how this total atmosphere affects people. Two street urchins dropped in on a beautiful church and one remarked, "Ain't it nice here; it just makes you feel like you want to be good." Would that the atmosphere of every church school were such that all should have a greater desire for goodness and godliness.—O. G. Herbrecht, in "The Bethany Church School Guide."

Are These Things Religious?'

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH TO ITS COMMUNITY

By JAMES MYERS

Industrial Secretary, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America;

Author of *Representative Government in Industry*, *Prayers for Self and Society*, and *Churches in Social Action*

Is not social responsibility one of the terms of individual salvation? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind—and thy neighbor as thyself." "This do," said Jesus, "and thou shalt live." There is no room in Jesus' definition of saving religion for the two schools of thought which have grown up within the church, one of them contending for the "individual" gospel and the other for the "social" gospel. There are not two gospels, but one. For when a man begins to take at all seriously the idea of loving his neighbor as himself, he finds himself utterly discontent with many social and economic conditions and systems. He finds it impossible to love his neighbor as himself and not dedicate himself to the cause of social reconstruction. The Christian conscience impels us to interpret the responsibility of the church to "its community" not in terms of its immediate geographical area alone, but of its total environment in the modern world.

ECONOMICS AND RELIGION

The church has too little understood the inescapably religious significance of economic, social and political phenomena. Take, for instance, the matter of unemployment. Here is a purely economic problem which according to some interpreters should not be considered the church's business. Yet this economic condition tends to defeat the very objectives which the church has always held most precious. Unemployment breaks human hearts; it breaks homes; it breaks morals; it breaks minds. It robs people of their rightful heritage of self-respect. It tends to make impossible the fine flower of human personality. It tends, after a time, to make people unemployable. And then, with unparalleled spiritual cruelty, some people begin to allege that the unemployed are "no good." The fact is that the economic condition of unemployment is as deleterious in its effect on human personality as was chattel slavery. Do we church folks love the eleven million people who are today unemployed in our country? If we really love them, we shall not be content unless this "purely economic" problem is solved, unemployment is abolished, and our neighbors

are once more given opportunity for the good life. The question for the church is not whether it believes in the "individual gospel," or the "social gospel," but simply whether it is *religious* enough to care.

EFFECT ON CHARACTER

All social surveys of slum areas have shown that because of congested living conditions there is a higher rate of delinquency and prostitution. On this account more boys and girls go wrong. The question, again, is simply whether or not we love the people who are now obliged to live in slums. If we love them, we shall not be content with merely establishing "missions" in tenement sections; we will do something about tearing down unhealthy and unsanitary housing, and building homes where boys and girls will have an equal opportunity with our own children to be good. In the Lord's Prayer, in which we pray for God's kingdom on earth, occurs the petition, "Lead us not into temptation." We must build the kind of a world which will tend to make men good. Is the church *religious* enough to do something about the abolition of the slums?

War has its roots in political-social-economic relations. Should the church meddle in such matters? We may venture to predict that future history will show that either the Christian religion or the war system will have disappeared from the earth. For Christianity stands for love, peace, understanding, tolerance, truth, justice, mercy, and good-will among men. War, while notable heroism and sacrifice are involved, nevertheless in its inherent nature and in its overwhelming results is unmitigated moral evil. It means hatred, intolerance, deliberate falsehoods about the enemy, bloodshed, cruelty, suffering of innocent women and children, blasphemy against the God of love, economic exploitation, carnage, international lawlessness and mass murder. While war is on, it is impossible for those involved to live like children of God. If the church is to fulfil its mission of saving the souls of individuals, and making it possible for them to live like children of God, it must abolish war. The sixty-two million members of Christian churches in America can keep this country out of war. The basic question is whether we are *religious* enough to do so; whether our loyalty to God and our religious faith are paramount, whether or not we have "given all to Christ."

* This is one of a series of articles made available through the International Council of Religious Education as a means of making effective the current emphasis on the community under the slogan, "Building Together a Christian Community."

Our present economic system is built primarily on the motive of profit for the private owners of industry. Great incidental service is of course rendered, but the main purpose of a corporation under the profit-system—according to interpretation by the courts—is to make the highest possible profit for the stockholders. And this basic purpose profoundly affects quality and prices to the consumer and the wages and working conditions of labor. Jesus said, "I came to minister, not to be ministered unto." This is exactly opposite to the primary motive of the profit system. Some Christian business men are feeling increasingly a desire to transform the very purpose of industry and its system of operation in order to bring it in line with the basic Christian motive of production for maximum human service, rather than for maximum private profit. Kagawa has called the consumers' cooperative movement—which he advocates—"the love principle of Christianity in economic action."

THE DEMOCRACY OF LABOR

A religious principle is also involved in the right of labor as well as employers to organize in unions or associations of their own choosing. For the principle of democracy—the right of the common man to a voice in determining the conditions which mean so much to his life, liberty and pursuit of happiness—rests back on Jesus' teaching of the infinite value of every human personality as a child of God. This belief has helped to develop in the common man an infinite self-respect which is incompatible with any form of autocracy, political or industrial. In the words of *The Social Ideals of the Churches*, "the churches should stand for the right of labor as well as employers to organize and bargain collectively; the protection of both in the exercise of this right; the obligation of both to work for the public good."

To be wealthy is a purely economic condition. Yet Jesus indicated the grave effect of this economic handicap on human personality. He said that it is difficult for a rich man to be saved: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven—it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The effect of an economic condition on character. A brotherly distribution of wealth would not only help to abolish poverty and balance production and consumption, but it would make it more possible for those now wealthy to enter into the good life.

The greatest danger of a violent proletarian revolution, and also of violent reaction in the form of Fascism, lies in the fact that those who now occupy positions of greatest power and influence, and who could most easily bring about peaceful progress, have, as a matter of fact, the least incentive toward social

change. They tend to defend things as they are. The church could make the greatest possible contribution to non-violent social progress if, in addition to encouraging the oppressed to use peaceful methods of change it should deeply stir the conscience of the ruling class so that they might rise to the moral height of the mind which was in Christ Jesus, who counted no privilege and power things to be grasped, but emptied himself in the service of man.

Will the church be specific enough in its religious teaching and requirements to make a real contribution to non-violent social progress? Or will it content itself with condemning the acts of desperate men when it is too late?

A subsequent article will discuss the question of the proper functions of the church in social relations, and will describe concrete programs, methods and techniques in religious education and social action which have been adopted by various churches.

THE CONTENT OF CONVERSION

The initial need in the church, however, is not so much one of technique as of a change of heart. Some contend that if the church were truly to convert individuals, social orders would take care of themselves. One would agree with this provided evangelism and religious education were to include the religious significance of social relations, and insist upon complete commitment to the social as well as the personal implications of love. There is room in the church for sincere people who may hold different ideas as to the exact social, economic and political measures best calculated to assure a brotherly social order; but is it too much to ask that every follower of Jesus should at least care supremely about making the good life possible for men and nations, and should dedicate his life and all that he possesses to this cause? Would it not be appropriate to include such understanding of religion in the requirements for joining the church, as well as incorporating it in all programs of religious education?

To "get the heart right" would, indeed, supply the dynamic for sweeping social reforms—if we were to test our personal religion by the mind of Christ. Many people in the church, for instance, probably think of "bearing their cross" merely in terms of the patient endurance of the inevitable suffering and sorrows of life. Commendable as that is, it fails in an understanding of one of the essential meanings of the cross. If the cross of Christ was a voluntary act—an assumption of the sufferings of others, a personal identification with the interests of those less privileged than himself. "Have that mind in you which was in Christ Jesus, who, though existing on an equality with God, counted it not a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself

(Concluded on page 138)

Working with Adults in the Rural Church

By WILLIAM C. ARBO, Lincoln, Vermont

"What is the matter with our adult department?" I asked of my Deacon Standby. He has been a member of the church for nearly half a century.

He wagged a bony forefinger under my nose and gazed at me with owlish solemnity. "Young folks are not what they used to be," he intoned mournfully. "Now, when I was a boy, this church was filled every Sabbath and the Sunday school classes——"

I had heard it all before, and so had he, and so have you, but since it doesn't help us much in solving our problem, why say it again?

"What is the matter with our adult department?" I asked a brisk young business executive. I had baptized him the previous Easter.

He looked at me for a long while, and I knew he was hunting around for a soft answer; and then he decided to be frank.

"Well, in the first place, we younger folks are not greatly interested in the things the older people in the adult classes want to do. And in the second place, I am not any too sure that they really want us in their classes."

Finally, I asked the question of my own heart, "What is the matter with our adult department?" I realized that while there was some truth in both of the answers I had heard, there was more, much more to be said, and that unless I found that "much more," and interpreted it with wisdom and tact, I should never solve the problem that was troubling me. Now to understand our present situation we must go back to the days when these older classes were first organized, and try to understand just what has happened to them.

About half a century ago there must have been a pedagogical Johnny Appleseed who went all over the country planting organized adult classes, wherever he found fertile soil on which to set them. I am constantly confronted with the results of his labors. In the days of their verdancy these classes bore much fruit—and did much good. Their most prominent characteristics are a carefully drawn—and usually over-elaborate—constitution, a lengthy list of by-laws, and an intense sense of class loyalty. The teachers of these groups have usually held office over a long period of years. To do them justice, while the manner of their instruction may not be particularly exhilarating, the depth of their biblical scholarship is usually profound. I have met lay Bible teachers who could give any theological seminary graduate a run for his money when it came to knowing and interpreting the Scriptures.

But the difficulty is that these organizations have become intensely ingrown. Exactly the same people are doing exactly the same things which they were doing thirty, forty, even fifty years ago. Traditions have developed. Iron-clad procedures have been established, and any variation from these hard and fast standards is tantamount to a sin against the Holy Ghost. But if the adult department is to become a vital educational force in church life, something must be done that will maintain the loyalty of these splendid older people and at the same time enlist the support of the younger, the young married couples, and the alumni of the young peoples' classes; who, after the helpfully inspiring experiences of the teen-age groups, feel chilled and uncomfortable in the usual adult department atmosphere.

One pastor was so fortunate as to have the solution to this problem walk up and tap him on the shoulder. It all came out of a play which a number of the young married people were rehearsing. The minister, between episodes of mock love-making to his own wife, visited with the other men and women in the show. As the time for the public performance approached, someone expressed regret because the pleasant fellowship which they had all enjoyed would so soon cease. Another member of the cast suggested that they form a Sunday school class; and perhaps get other people like themselves to join with them in church work.

This was done, and it became the custom of the group to meet once a month for a social evening and business session. Bible study sessions were held at the usual Sunday school hour. At the organization meeting there were seven present; four years later an attendance of forty was not unusual. And this happened in a community of less than eight hundred people, and in a church predominantly rural.

That church today has what might be called a graded adult department. There are of course no diplomas awarded, and the members do not shift from class to class, but an honest effort has been made to provide for the interests of every adult group which the church touches.

Thus, at the outer edge of the church's activities there is the home department, a beautiful bit of missionary work carried on for shut-ins and the folks who live on back-hill farms. Seldom properly recognized, and often utterly neglected when reports are being prepared, the superintendent of this phase of our adult work is doing a great deal for people whose only contact with the church and religious affairs is through her efforts.

Then there is a class of very elderly women; grandmothers, most of them who were the active women of the church long ago. Their attendance on Sunday is small because advancing years has made travel impossible for many of them. But once a year the founder of the class, a woman herself over eighty, still very active in church life, arranges a party for them. On that afternoon they come by car and team from all over the community, to live again in memory the days when they were at the center of things in the little church. Thus the sunset years are made golden through happy recollections of work well done.

Next comes a parallel grouping of a men's brotherhood class and a woman's Bible class. The former is composed of the deacons, the trustees, the "pillars of the church" and their associates; and the other class consists almost entirely of their women-folks. There is of course no rule to this effect. Theoretically, all adults are invited, but actually, that is the way it stands. It may be good; it may be bad; but there it is.

Next in line comes the class of young married people previously mentioned. Study, fellowship and service keep them happy, and an increasingly large number of them are finding their way not only into the membership of the church, but also into positions of trust and responsibility.

The latest experimental link in the chain is a group of "engaged couples" who have started a class of their own. While it is too early to pass judgment on this development, if enthusiasm is any guarantee of success, they are bound for big things in the years ahead.

There are many good reasons why the scheme just outlined would not be at all practical in some churches. Supposing, for instance, it was a church with a limited number of adults, two fairly strong adult classes, one for men and the other for women, and two good teachers. We would not want to release either teacher by joining them, and we might not want to start a new class because of the difficulty of finding a third teacher. Then the only thing to do is to make the program already in progress so varied as to attract a wider range of men and women. A simple organization for such a department would be one in which Sunday study periods were held separately, but social and service projects shared in common. If the pastor wishes to make such a change, the first move would be to invite both classes to the parsonage for a pleasant social evening. When the new plan had been explained, a committee of cooperation, comprising two men, two women and the pastor might be created. Then all present should be encouraged to contribute ideas for class activities. The ideal program for any adult department is one which the members themselves build out of their own interests and desires.

In the average church, the men's class will obviously

be the weakest. A little study will reveal many things that are peculiarly appropriate to their interest. Here are a few suggestions which may stimulate anyone planning a program for such a group.

1. *Boy Scouts.* The men of the church should be officially connected with the church troop, if there is one, and they should sponsor a new one if there is none already. There are many things that men can do for boys in this way.

2. *Service.* Repairs, redecorating, janitor service and such other "good turn" activities. The participants will be richly repaid for their labors through joy in the doing of worth-while work.

3. *Forums.* Many men's groups have been drawn together by monthly suppers, after which competent speakers present live topics for debate and discussion. If the church is located near a college, so that it is easy to secure speakers, this is a particularly valuable type of activity.

4. *Evangelism.* In New Testament times the gospel was spread through one person's telling another about Jesus. Men today, when properly approached, find this same method a wonderful challenge.

5. *Enlistment.* Stewardship of time, possession and talents is definitely one of the lessons we must teach our men, and any activity that leads them into experiences in these directions will make for a better and more loyal churchmanship.

The women of the church will probably have a strong program already under way, but if new ideas for them are desired, such projects as mission study, money-raising activities (suppers and fairs), sunshine work among the shut-ins and sick, sponsorship and encouragement of the W. W. G. and White Cross—in churches where there is no women's mission society—will enlist their interest and support.

It will be the duty of the committee on cooperation to sift out all the suggestions offered and prepare a program suited to the needs of the particular group. Games and refreshments may well close such an evening gathering.

If the two groups desire to continue their joint relationship, the committee on cooperation will be responsible for providing places of meeting and general supervision of the activities. It would be a clearing house for all business of the entire department. The department might also want a membership, a financial and a program committee.

Here is a possible skeleton outline for successive monthly meetings.

7.30 p. m. Worship, led by pastor, or, preferably, a member who has made careful preparation for it in advance. This should be varied and inspirational. The development of a special quartet to sing at these gatherings will be of great assistance.

(Concluded on page 140)

The Teacher Meets Himself

By W. G. MONTGOMERY, Mattoon, Illinois

Until the teacher takes himself in hand, looks himself over to discover his own weakness and strength, he cannot teach others as he should. It is not enough to know the needs of his pupils, he should seek to know his own needs, and supply them. The teacher's most important pupil is, and always will be, himself. Other pupils will come and go, but this one remains; and neglecting this one, harms all the others. As a teacher, I owe it to my pupils to meet myself face to face each day and find out just what kind of a person I am.

Looking at himself, does the teacher find that he is all he should be in his moral behavior? Does he teach one standard of ethics in class and practise another outside? What a teacher is, counts more than what he says, in teaching students how to live. It is not that a teacher is expected to be above mistakes; it does mean that being himself his most important pupil, he will do his best to discover his mistakes and correct them before his critics do.

Looking at himself, he will perhaps feel the need of a better preparation. This sense of need is proof that he is already a good teacher, and will become a better one. (Those who feel no sense of need—if there be any such—are hopeless). Then he will become a better one by constantly comparing and judging himself, applying the same severe criticism to himself that his worst critic might use. He will question himself about his qualifications, general and special. What right has he to teach, anyway?

What of his general attitude toward teaching? Does he find teaching a task, or a pleasure? Does he give himself gladly, or grudgingly to the class? Is he glad when his class session begins, and sorry when it ends? Does he count his work a privilege, or just so much time to be "put in"? Meeting the class with a smile, not forced, will do much toward gaining the respect and love of the pupils. This right attitude includes not only a love for teaching, but optimism, good-will to all, and a special desire to lead students into a larger life.

As the teacher meets himself, he will study his own personality. Does he have poise and self-control? Is his temper uneven, or easily ruffled? Upon thus meeting himself, he will seek to remedy defects of personality. He will train himself never to give way to excited feelings or heated arguments in class or out. Always this "first pupil" will be guarded by the same restrictions imposed upon or expected of his other pupils.

Of all the pupils he ever meets, this first one will

need to be calm and undisturbed under all sorts of distractions and petty annoyances. If the teacher becomes nervous, irritated, or speaks in a harsh tone, the same spirit of nervous unrest will be communicated to the class. The control of hands and feet, omitting all unnecessary movements, is a big help in maintaining order. In meeting himself, he will look over his entire nervous temperament to see if there is anything in his personality which might repel instead of attract.

Upon meeting himself, does he find that he possesses a sense of humor? There is no single greater asset a teacher can have than a natural gift of humor? It will sometimes open doors into lives that no other keys will unlock. Fortunate is the teacher who can see the humorous side even to the serious situation. A laugh will often relieve tension and save a desperate situation. Of course the teacher laughs with his pupils, not at them! Being cheerful and happy are as important for pupils as knowing their lessons. Thus the teacher who radiates mirth and joy instead of gloom has a big advantage to begin with. Such a teacher usually gets through with the lessons in good shape, causing even the most backward pupils to want more instead of less.

Does the teacher upon meeting himself find that he is naturally friendly? If not, he will teach himself to become so—and the sooner the better. Sometimes it is the inferiority feeling that causes a teacher to withdraw himself from others, appearing unsocial when he is not really so. If this first pupil is controlled by "complexes," then give him a psychological study, until the causes are found and the remedies applied. Effective teaching depends upon the ability to make pleasing contacts, and this cannot be done by a person who is a slave to complexes, whether they be inferior, superior, or some other kind.

The popular teacher, wherever you find him, meets all his students on the same level, and treats them all alike. He mixes well with all classes, persons and conditions. He greets the good and bad, the rich and the poor alike. He recognizes his pupils and calls them by name wherever he meets them. I wonder if some teachers do not fail at this point, making themselves unpopular when they ought not to be. We recognize pupils in class, but outside do not always know them. Some of us might learn valuable lessons from the local politicians. Their election or defeat may depend upon the friendliness of their approach, their ability to catch names, and recall them in a flash.

Meeting himself, he can see whether he is sympathetic or harsh in his judgments and estimation of

others. He will then look for the good qualities in others, rather than the bad ones. He will put the best construction on the actions of his pupils, and be more ready to praise than blame.

He will respect the opinions of his pupils, thank them for their view-points, even if he does not agree with them. Never does he take direct issue with a pupil. He welcomes ideas from all, but never encourages arguments. So he teaches this first pupil to be broad-minded on matters of opinion, and then the other pupils naturally become so. He never assumes to know everything, nor thinks of his opinions as final. He gives out and takes in, of the best, enriching his own life and the lives of his pupils.

He teaches himself not to speak of his personal difficulties. He listens to others who wish to unload their burdens, but keeps his own misfortunes to himself. He may be ill enough to go to bed, but no one will know this as he stands before his class. Plenty of others will tell their troubles. He will listen, be sympathetic, and silent about his own. This is one of the best general qualifications a teacher can have.

It hardly needs to be said that, meeting himself, and seeing his own limitations, he will look forward to his preparation to teach the next lesson, and every lesson. He will discover that effective teaching is of the heart, hand, and head—a threefold process.

Good teaching, he will discover upon examining himself, consists not merely in imparting information, but is of itself inspiration, lodging in the mind of the pupil the will to achieve. It consists in bringing pupils face to face with themselves, and with the realities of living.

Information is the means rather than the end of good teaching. The end is that of a human personality being transformed into something beautiful, unique and divine; with the added power of being able to appreciate the highest and best creation gives. True teaching is cumulative, expanding mind and spirit to the limit of their possibilities. As he meets himself, this first pupil will see that he needs all the information possible for him to attain. He will study to be keen-minded, alert and interesting.

Yes, every teacher is his own most important pupil, the first he will ever have, and the last.

A sad day for both teacher and church school, when this most important pupil is neglected. It is only the teacher who is continually teaching himself that is able to lead his other pupils into a fuller, richer life of understanding and appreciation.

RELIGION is the trumpet-call of man's unconquerable soul breathing a challenge to the armies of doubt, sorrow and sin.

NOBODY will know what you mean by saying "God is love" unless you act it as well.—*L. P. Jacks.*

Are These Things Religious?

(Concluded from page 134)

self and took upon himself the form of man, and became obedient unto death, yea the death of the cross. A voluntary identification with humanity, with a view to its redemption, and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

Do we measure our personal religion by this test? Have we voluntarily identified our interests with those of folks less privileged than ourselves—with the unemployed, with the poor, with those who live in slums with child-laborers, with industrial workers, with the share-croppers, with the Negro and other exploited races and nations? Are we as distressed over the situation as though it were our own? Are we prepared to say with a great labor leader, "So long as there is a lower class, I am in it; so long as there is a soul in prison, I am not free." Are we personally happy and content only as we see an increasing measure of justice and of possibilities for the good life for those who are less privileged than ourselves? Or are we content with social and economic systems and conditions to the degree in which they benefit our personal fortunes and the happiness of our own families? Do we have in us that mind which was in Christ Jesus? The degree of social responsibility felt by the church will depend upon our answer to that question.

Our Kingdom of God

God has a kingdom of nature in which many good and beautiful things are provided for us, but the kingdom of God of which we think and of which we are a part is the reign of God in the individual heart and the righteousness of God in social and national affairs. That Kingdom will never be forwarded by force of arms, but rather by our whole-hearted devotion to his purposes, becoming better citizens of the Kingdom ourselves, and by giving our loyalty to those good and elevating things that will help redeem all areas of life to their rightful place with God.—*George Arthur Clarke.*

It Is Better

To think of the pupil and his needs than the lesson and its importance.

To change a life than display much learning.

Many teachers aim at nothing, and don't miss it.

"I enjoyed your lecture" is a doubtful compliment for a teacher. "I see the truth, and shall try to live it" is a much better one.

The size of a class is immaterial, if nothing is learned; for nothing times any number is equal to nothing.—*J. L. Corzine, in "The Baptist New Mexican."*

Learning for Life; the New Adult Program

(A SERIES OF FIVE ARTICLES)

By O. G. HERBRECHT,¹ Des Moines, Iowa

V. PROGRESS AND BALANCE IN PERSONAL LIVING

Mr. Average Adult of the church is constantly in danger of two temptations: He may become so eager in his religion that instead of walking in the Kingdom, he prefers to *ride*—on a hobby. The other temptation is to become self-satisfied with his religious status; to draw a line under it, or survey it from the doorway of his self-house, and proclaim, "Soul, thou hast enough!"

Both of these are undesirable; the second more so than the first; for spiritual stoppage is as dangerous as the physical. Examples of both are found in nearly every church.

The new adult program, "Learning for Life," plans to provide Christian men and women with a wide enough range of lesson emphases that they will not so easily become one-sided in their thinking. At the same time, it holds up to the adult the idea that, regardless of years, he not only may but should advance in his religious life.

Here, then, we face two vital elements in Christian living—progress and balance; and they are closely related.

I well recall my first bicycle—and the first requisite for riding it—to stay on! For staying on was riding. Until I could get the hang of keeping my balance I could make no progress at all—save into the ditch. It was not long before I discovered that the very going of the wheel helped me keep my balance. The machine simply would not stay right side up—with me on it—unless it was in motion. There is this same curious interaction of balance and movement in Christian living.

The balanced religionist becomes the most helpful. One of the most interesting things to do—and maybe one of the cruelest!—is to quiz an adult church school class on some other things than moral applications. Ask them, for example, the names of their national denominational leaders. The names and places of their home and foreign missionaries. The location and personnel of their denominational institutions, such as hospitals, orphanages, colleges, divinity schools. Ask them how their denominational machinery is organized. Ask them to state the outstanding doctrines of their church in distinction from those of

other churches. Ask them what those other churches believe. Ask them the difference between Christianity and the other great religions of the world. Ask them what the Protestant churches in America are doing together. Ask them what the "Oxford Group" is, and what they think of it. In other words, probe a bit into the *balance* of their religious knowledge. When this is done we shall very likely discover that those whose knowledge of these things is broadest are the helpful ones in the church. Ignorance and narrowness are foes to usefulness.

Balance also gives fairer judgment and readier sympathy. There is so much criticism unleashed against Christianity and the church that the one-sided Christian adult is blown like a reed in the wind, or has his faith trampled like grass under the hoofs of a stampeding herd. Ordinarily, too, one-sided adults are liable to be among our intolerants. Knowing and seeing only one point of view, they have no judgment of or sympathy for those whose thinking is not as theirs. No one is a Christian who dares to disagree with them!

It is refreshing therefore, to meet with Christian men and women whose minds can light up the wider fields of faith; who can talk helpfully about the total area of life; who know facts about religious conditions in other lands; who can quote the opinions of great religious thinkers. Being "well read," their judgment is to be relied upon, and their attitudes have not only the kindliness of culture, but the warmth of real sympathy. And certainly, keeping one's knowledge and outlook broad and balanced is the surest way to escape becoming that class nuisance, the hobby rider. So many issues religious and social are being peddled to religious people these days that one must conserve one's sanity of mind in order to have saving judgment and discernment of the truth.

In addition to balance, however, men and women of the church must do some honest thinking about the continuous development of their own lives. Here too balance will help—even as on the bicycle!

The books call attention to the fact that when we are young, the plan of promotion from grade to grade, in both public and church school, keeps us reminded of progress and acts as a spur to it. But in adult life there is no such reminder and encouragement. True; and we ought not to need it. Promotion through grades is after all only a scheme for the immature, an

¹The writer is director of young people's work for the Iowa Council of Christian Education. He is the author of *Facing North*, *The Extension Division of the Church School*, and many published dramatizations and religious educational articles.

outward symbol of an inner achievement. In after years the growth within should continue, even though the symbolism is done away.

The gravest danger of the non-progressing adult is that the thing which no longer causes us to grow loses at last not only its power over us, but its attraction for us.

To illustrate. The deep difference between great art and mediocre art, great music and average music, is this: To the great picture we return again and again, and each time we turn from it a little finer, a little better. But the picture that leaves no mark on us—at the last we take it down and stow it away—to make room for something new.

May it not be true that one reason for the sporadic and frequent appearance of freak church groups, with distorted emphases, is those unsatisfied adults who have not been growing. Faith has ceased to leave its mark on them. They are seeking restlessly for another picture to hang in the place of the old.

It must occur, also, to adults that real Christlikeness consists not alone in the possession of established Christian facts and truths, but also in the continual enlargement of life after the pattern of Jesus. To the student with open eyes there is an astounding difference between Jesus at the beginning and the Jesus of the end of the Gospels; to say nothing of the difference between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Jesus of Revelation.

To the onlooking world a Christian identifies himself not only by the claims and practices of Jesus, but even more truly by the constant expansion of Christian spirit, the enlarging graces of the soul, the deepening insights into things temporal and eternal. Of such, also, is the kingdom of God!

As adults pursue the new quest of balance and progress, it is important to remember that they can achieve neither of these without arriving first at a steadiness of mind and heart, which becomes to them a holding power. If it is not sacrilegious to mention a circus in a religious article, the adult Christian might consider seriously the tight-rope walker, who makes safe progress by virtue of successful balance, and can have both because his brain is clear, his nerves steady and his muscles obedient to his will. He has not only a good hold on himself—these things have a good hold on him.

Less picturesque, but seriously illustrative of that last sentence, is E. Stanley Jones' introduction to his book, *Christ at the Round Table*, where he writes: "This book has written itself. . . The convictions written in this book have gathered themselves to me over a long period. They have come to me almost irresistibly, and now it seems that I do not hold them, rather they seem to hold me." There lies the deepest secret of progress and balance in life.

Working with Adults in the Rural Church

(Concluded from page 136)

8.00. General business sessions, presided over by the chairman of the committee on cooperation. Reports of committees, plans for each group, and other items of general interest should be presented. These meetings should be brisk, and lively, but ample opportunity must be provided for each member to express himself. Nothing kills an adult class so quickly as the feeling that two or three people do all the planning and all the deciding (and all the talking!), while the rest simply carry out orders.

8.30. Literary program, study or discussion—a may seem most advisable.

9.15. Games, fellowship and refreshments—according to the desires of the program committee and the host and hostess.

This is of course subject to all sorts of changes. Local customs may dictate an earlier or later beginning, and experience may reveal that some parts of the schedule should be longer or shorter. But the heart of the thing is simply this: that adults, like children, learn through doing. Their activities must be definitely related to their needs, and any successful program must be planned in terms of their life-interests.

Adult Conference at Lake Geneva

Last August two hundred earnest representatives of twenty-four evangelical bodies met at Lake Geneva for two weeks of intensive prayer and study. The United Christian Adult Movement was launched as a result of that significant gathering. The past ten months have witnessed a rapid growth of this dynamic Christian movement, and in response to wide demand the second of these Lake Geneva conferences is being called for this summer. The date, July 3 to 15, has been selected. The conference will be broken into two sections. From July 3 to July 10 last year's delegates together with denominational officials, will come together for necessary preliminary work. A general invitation is extended to new delegates to join in the conference from July 10 to July 15. Here is a fine opportunity for our influential adult and young adult workers to combine a vacation with the delightful fellowship of the Lake Geneva Conference. The cost will be very moderate. Considering the benefits to be derived, it becomes a vacation with pay.

Write your state or national director for further details.

*Gods fade; but God abides and in man's heart
Speaks with the clear unconquerable cry
Of energies and hopes that cannot die.*

—JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

RECENT BOOKS

Order All Books from The American Baptist Publication Society

FIFTY SERMON-TALKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS. By Carl S. Weist. Willett, Clark & Co. 145 pages. Price, \$1.50.

An excellent collection of short, sprightly talks for young folks from ten to fifteen years old. Some of the titles are: "Running Toward Your Own Goal," "The Annual Track Meet," "The Scrub Team," "The Circus Band," "Trains Won't Wait."

BABIES. By Ruth Alexander Nichols. The Macmillan Company. Price, \$1.50.

This is another of Mrs. Nichols' delightful photographic picture-books. This time she has chosen the world's favorite subject, and has developed it by means of the best from her large collection of photographs of babies. Those who do not like babies will not like the book—which leaves it a wide field indeed among old and young alike!

NEW TESTAMENT STORIES. By Lillie A. Faris. Platt & Munk Company, Inc. 1936. 124 pages. Price, \$1.25.

This large book contains thirty-five stories from the life of Christ and ten from the lives of the apostles. The stories are brief, and for the most part well-told. The book is printed in large clear type and is profusely illustrated with many black-and-white drawings and six full-page pictures in four colors. It will be enjoyed by children under twelve. It is the type of book that parents are constantly asking for.

HOMESPUN: ALONG FRIENDLY ROAD. By William Hiram Foulkes. The Abingdon Press. 1936. 186 pages. Price, \$1.00.

Those who are acquainted with the friendly pastor of Old First Church (Presbyterian), Newark, will know without being told what heart-warming messages are to be found in this volume. It sparkles with humor and is laden with common sense and Christian cheer.

HERE'S MONEY FOR THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY. By William H. Leach. Cokesbury Press. 1936. 176 pages. Price, \$1.00.

In his frank and personal style, the author lifts "the budget" from cold hard figures and invests it with real life and meaning. His book will help people to see their place in the "giving" life of the church. The author's idea of the unified budget is ideal, if the people can be made missionary-minded, to see that their privilege is to contribute to missions as well as to the local church.

HUMOR, OLD AND NEW

"SCIENTISTS say that mosquitoes weep. Is that true?"

"It's possible. I've seen a moth ball."

WIFE. "The new washwoman has stolen two of our towels."

HUBBY. "Which ones, dear?"

WIFE. "The ones we got from the Hotel Pennsylvania!"

TOURIST. "This seems to be a very dangerous precipice. It's a wonder they don't put up a warning sign."

NATIVE. "Yes, it is dangerous. They kept a warning sign up for two years, and no one fell over, so it was taken down."

LADY. "Are you sure these lobsters are fresh?"

FISHMONGER. "Madam, they are positively insulting."

"DEAR Clara," wrote the young man, "pardon me, but I'm getting so forgetful. I proposed to you last night, but really forgot whether you said yes or no."

"Dear Will," she replied by note, "so glad to hear from you. I knew that I said no to somebody last night, but had forgotten who it was."

"ALL very interesting," said the woman "prospect" to the motor-car salesman, "and now show me the depreciation, will you? I hear it is heavy on these cars."

"To tell the truth madam," replied the super-salesman, "we found it a constant source of worry, and had it removed altogether."

THE teacher was trying to give her pupils an illustration of the word "perseverance."

"What is it," she asked, "that carries a man along rough roads and smooth roads, up hills and down hills, through jungles and swamps and raging torrents?"

There was a silence, and then Tommy, whose father was a motor dealer, spoke up.

"Please, miss," he said, "there ain't no such car."

Lesson Topics for June

- | | |
|----------|---|
| June 6. | JOSEPH'S READINESS FOR SERVICE. Genesis 37, 39 to 41. |
| June 13. | THE BROTHERLY LOVE OF JUDAH. Gen. 42:1 to 45:15. |
| June 20. | JOSEPH'S KINDNESS TO HIS KINDRED. Gen. 45:16 to 50:26. |
| June 27. | MESSAGES FROM GENESIS. John 1:1-5; Luke 17:26-32; Gal. 3:6-8; Heb. 11:1-22; 2 Peter 2:4-10. |

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS (IMPROVED UNIFORM SERIES)

SECOND QUARTER, 1937: MESSAGES FROM GENESIS

AIM. To lead the student to understand and appreciate the practical significance of Genesis with particular reference to God as the Creator, to the lives of outstanding personalities, and to the establishment of moral and social standards

These lessons are developed from outlines prepared by the Committee on Improved Uniform Lessons of the International Council. The outlines are copyrighted, 1935, by the International Council of Religious Education and are used by permission

LESSON V. MAY 2. CREATIVE FAITH

Gen. 11: 27 to 20: 18. (Verses printed, Gen. 12: 1-9; 13: 14-18)

GENERAL THEME: ABRAHAM A MAN OF FAITH

[This lesson written by W. QUAY ROSSELLE, D.D., Malden, Mass.]

Devotional Reading for the Opening Service: Hebrews 11: 8-10, 17-19

KEY VERSE: By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance.—Heb. 11: 8

12:1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this

land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

13: 14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot had separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Protestants reorganized religion around Paul's great insight.

Sunday. The Triumph of Faith. Heb. 11: 17-19. In the severest test to which God's leading could be put Abraham rose triumphant. We may know more than Abraham did, but does our loyalty to the faith that is in us match his?

At the Threshold of the Lesson

Faith is one of the most important subjects that can engage our thoughts. All through the Bible it occupies a central place. Drop it out and nothing remains that is essential to religion as Christ taught it.

Much passes for faith that is not real faith. Like many other concepts, the New Testament gives it a larger and richer meaning than it had in the older Scriptures. Abraham believed God. That is, he committed himself, without reserve, to God as he knew him. But since the coming of Christ and the revelation of God in Christ, we Christians have a nobler object of faith than Abraham could have. The stinging rebuke for us is that Abraham's confidence in God, whom he dimly knew, and his courageous submission to the divine will so often surpass our own surrender to the loving Father revealed in Christ Jesus.

That in this early day there arose a man spiritually sensitive enough to apprehend God, and noble enough to trust him with undaunted courage, marks off Abraham as one of the mighty heroes of the human race, a challenge and an inspiration to us all. Many of us are brought into judgment as we study his life.

The Lesson Before Us

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

No other word bulks larger than faith—in its various forms—in the Bible. From beginning to end the Scriptures are organized about faith in God. It is everywhere linked with our salvation. "Therefore being justified by faith, we

A Bible Message for Every Day

Monday. The Call of Abraham. Gen. 12: 1-5. The urge to move westward Abraham believed to be the summons of God. It was an adventure—passing from the known into the unknown. Thus it was a symbol of life, which is ever an adventure.

Tuesday. Abraham's Arrival in Canaan. Gen. 12: 6-9. "And the Canaanite was then in the land." God's gifts often include difficulties to be overcome. The first act of Abraham was to erect an altar of worship to God.

Wednesday. The Promise to Abraham. Gen. 13: 14-18. "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Abraham's own nephew, Lot, selfishly took the better land. Abraham's gener-

osity was rewarded; Lot's selfishness punished. It is ever so.

Thursday. False Children of Abraham. John 8: 33-39. These Jews were physically the descendants of Abraham, but spiritually they were not. Jesus puts sonship upon a spiritual basis: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8: 14).

Friday. True Children of Abraham. Gal. 3: 3-9. Faith is one of the "fruits of the Spirit." Not legal exactions, not ritualistic regulations, but the persuasions of the Spirit in the soul lead the man of faith. All who are thus led are the true children of Abraham.

Saturday. Justification by Faith. Rom. 3: 20-26. This was Martin Luther's war-cry and the dynamic of the Protestant Reformation. Under Luther the

have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1, 2). The rediscovery of this truth led to the Protestant Reformation.

It is faith that gives power to our lives to resist all appeals of low aims and enticements to unworthy conduct: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Faith is the principle of unity in the church. The fact that the church has been split up into so many fragments over definitions of faith is evidence of the lack of faith itself: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). We speak of belonging to different "faiths." This conception of faith makes, not for unity, but for disunity. We cannot pluralize faith.

Faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit. There is a kind of anemic and negative piety which often passes as spirituality. But we may be sure that if the Spirit of God is in us we shall have the great powers which the Spirit produces in the lives of men. These powers are named for us: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23). "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Faith is a matter so great that only God can create it.

Faith is our protection against the assaults of evil. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:14, 15). The shield of faith, covering all other protective graces, is our first defense against spiritual peril. These illustrations show how faith is bound up with all other elements of the spiritual life.

II. THE NATURE OF FAITH

Surely one of the best definitions of faith is given us by the author of the Book of Hebrews: "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (11:1). It introduces the Bible classic on the subject. As a matter of fact, we all walk by faith, and not alone by sight. For a long time Edison knew that the electric light was there, before ever he saw it. The thing not seen was yet evident to him. It was this that carried him resolutely on to success. Faith has been the energizing incentive of all great scientists and explorers. The electric light, the radio, the airship, were all there in Abraham's day, and awaited only the coming of the Edisons, the Marconis, and the Wright brothers to find them.

No man hath seen God at any time, nevertheless faith knows that God is. There is a deep power in the spiritual nature of man that sees what the eye cannot, and knows what the mind does not. One of our great Christian scholars has said that God is more than we can think: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

But the word faith carries another meaning. It includes submitting the life to the truth which the spirit sees. This Abraham did. He, like Paul, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Who of us can say as much for himself? After faith has shown us the divinity and the lordship of Christ, it demands that we wholly submit our lives to him. Only when we have done that have we actually believed on the Son of God. We may give assent to all the theological statements about Christ without believing on him at all.

The word faith is used also in the Bible in the sense of being faithful. Loyal adherence to Christ, through everything that can happen to us, is a part of faith; and here Abraham is an inspiration to us.

III. THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

It cost Abraham much to respond to God's call. Faith is the good fight, and the wrestling against spiritual wickedness in high places. The heroic faith of Abraham is shown by two trials—in what he was called from, and in what he was called to. Here is what he was called from: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house." Breaking home ties is one of life's hardest experiences. Every missionary must do just this when he responds to God's call to leave home and country to give his life to an alien people. We know how desperate was the homesickness of our soldiers overseas during the World War.

Abraham's faith had hard trial also in accepting what he was called to. Whatever may have been his hopes during the long and hazardous journey, he must have suffered some disappointment when he arrived in Canaan. It was not physically a hospitable land; and "the Canaanite was there." There was no welcome, rather the opposite. He erected his first altar to God amid a hostile people who were to resist him on every hand. Added to all this there soon came a famine which compelled him to flee to Egypt for a time.

God does not promise a life of ease as a reward of faith. Apparently God multiplied hardships upon his servant; and it is against this that his faith shines out as the rainbow against the storm-cloud. At the end of the heroes of faith catalogued in Hebrews we read: "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder,

were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

IV. REAL AND SPURIOUS FAITH

Faith is never mere credulity. It is first of all, assurance in the soul's insight into truth, and then unflinching loyalty to it. We sometimes hear ourselves admonished to believe something. But much depends on what that something is. To be doggedly attached to error is disastrous both to the individual and to society. There are many who have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Our missionaries have deliberately worked to destroy the faith of people in fetishes and the like. Of course the wise missionary does this in a constructive way, supplanting the wrong object of faith by a worthier one. Faith is a means of knowing spiritual truth. It is a "fruit of the Spirit," and the Spirit of God leadeth into all truth.

V. THE SURRENDER OF FAITH

Abraham's father, Terah, had the call to enter upon the journey from Ur to the land of promise. He made the start, with his family and his possessions, and traveled as far as Haran. Apparently he found Haran an attractive place, so much so that he tarried there, perhaps for many years. The dismal record is that Terah died in Haran. How many of us are living in Harans where we are doomed to die! It was left to Abraham to fulfil the mission in which his father had failed.

After burying his father he pressed on in obedience to God's leading. A false faith will fail; a genuine faith will endure to the end. We are often troubled because some of our young people seem to lose their faith when they go to college. No doubt there are teachers who have an injurious effect upon their students in this regard. But often the fault is not so much with the college as with the early training of the students, which had anchored faith in concepts which of necessity must wither away in the light of larger knowledge. A genuine faith is based on intelligence, and it will not fail.

VI. FAITH IS AN ADVENTURE

Adventure is passing from the known to the unknown. But of that very necessity of life many of us are afraid. Abraham went out at God's call not knowing where he was going. Life is like that; and unhappy is the person who fears it. The future is hid from us. We have faith that there is a future, and such faith is a powerful influence in our lives, every day that we live. Faith knows that there is life after what we call death: and confidently we who have faith press on toward it.

*"I know not where his islands lift
Their fronded palms in air:
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care."*

Practical Questions for Class Discussion

- ¶ The theory of our Baptist churches is that every person is free to find spiritual truth for himself. The Roman Catholic Church presents her doctrines as divinely sanctioned dogmas, which it is sinful to question in any degree. Can we defend our Baptist theory here?
- ¶ The conduct of society in its economic and industrial purposes would seem often to violate Christ's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. Does this show unbelief in the Master's words? How do you explain the con-

duct of some evidently sincere Christian business men and politicians?

- ¶ When we are told that we walk by faith and not by sight, what meaning are we to give to the word "sight" and what to the word "faith"?
- ¶ Does God speak as directly to us today as he did to Abraham? Apart from the Scriptures, how does he speak to us?
- ¶ The Oxford Groups lay great stress upon divine *guidance*. How does God guide us to right decisions, and then empower us to carry them out? How may we be sure that an impulse is the inspiration of Almighty God?

TEACHERS' HELPS

In the Men's Class

Charles C. Stillman,¹ Columbus, Ohio

ABRAHAM A MAN OF FAITH

Only a few days ago, as I was sorting some papers, I stumbled upon a very faded "manuscript" (rather heavy name for what I found) with the following caption:

"National Missionary Heroes. C. E. Topic for August 28, 1904. Prepared for C. E. Society of West Hoosick, N. Y., Baptist Church. Text, Hebrews 11:8, 'He went out, not knowing whither he went.'"

At that time I was pastor of the little country church—my first pastorate. Indulge me while I quote a paragraph or two:

"Abraham with his faith has much company in history. This eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a roll of honor, and every name is gold-starred. Here is a fine roll-call. As the writer of Hebrews calls the names, we hear the responses of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses. Each answers with the word 'faith.' Men with faith are the benefactors of their time. I would rather sit in the shadow of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and be privileged through divine grace to answer God's eternal roll-call by the one word 'faith,' than to bask in the mid-day sun of heroes' glory, consort with czar or emperor in the glamor and glitter of royalty, or be listed with those whom the world places in the top story of achievement, glory and success.

"Faith has charmed the life of many a missionary hero, who has gone forth not knowing whither he went. They have been decked with no amulet except this one gem faith, pendant from the heart. That has been their strength, their charm to ward off evil, their incentive to onward movement, their one

reason and justification for doing God's work with man's hands."

In the text suggested for this lesson I especially like Genesis 12:5 and 13:14. The former, "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." The latter, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward."

Start from scratch—the place where thou art—and look in all directions. A youngster in an elementary school, as safety was being taught, was asked in what direction he should look as he stepped from the sidewalk to cross the street. "In all directions," was his rather comprehensive answer. The vision outlined for Abraham was not negative and restraining, but positive and encircling.

Life always has its frontiers and always will. This is certainly true of knowledge. On the afternoon of the very day on which I am writing these notes (it is now 11 P. M.), the assistant to the president of the university with which I am connected said to me: "The fact is that in such a department (naming one) the professors are teaching stuff they taught ten years ago." Now ten years is a very long time in the nurture of ideas.

President Tyler Dennett, of Williams College, in an address delivered at the Mark Hopkins Centenary Convocation, in October, 1936, said:

"It was quite natural for Albert Hopkins (professor and brother of Mark Hopkins), when he wanted an observatory, to call his students together, provide them with crowbars, and lead them out on to East Mountain to quarry the stone for the observatory of which Albert himself appears to have been architect and to some extent the mason."

Ohio State University is now erecting a new building to house the School of Social Administration, of which I have the honor to be director. How did we get it? Did I, as a weak type of Albert Hopkins, call together the boys, furnish

tools, and go out for stone and timber? I did not. We entered into partnership with the Works Progress Administration of Ohio. Limestone comes from Indiana, steel from Pittsburgh, and so forth. Considerable water has run under the bridge since the days of Mark and Albert Hopkins. (This time it was another man named Hopkins—Harry L. Hopkins, director of the well-known W. P. A.)

How times have changed with reference to the hunt for learning is neatly described by President Dennett:

"There is another respect in which the present generation and present circumstances are quite different. College education is now a social badge to be worn with white vest and tails. There are many places where you cannot be long without it. Application for college entrance may mean nothing more than that some boy or his parents wish to do what other people are doing. Application for admission to college, far from showing character, may even show the lack of it."

Sidney Lanier wrote of Christopher Columbus:

Driven by an onward-ache,
Scorning souls that circles make.

There are too many souls going around in circles. As for Abraham, he started for Canaan—and *got there*. His vision was big and broad.

This matter of new frontiers is easily demonstrated in all departments of life work: telephone, telegraph, wireless, radio. Soon it will be television. Oxen, horses, locomotives, airplanes, clipper, rowboats, sails, steam, electricity; oil, gas; soon we shall be harnessing the sun's rays for work.

Consider our own country. We are in a new social era today as compared with only four or five years ago. Momentous changes are breaking under our own eyes. The United States of America is being remade—whether for good or ill may be a matter of opinion.

Abraham's faith was linked with God. May our visions and our pursuits as our arrivals be based upon the call of God.

Before My Class of Women

Colena Michael Anderson,¹
McMinnville, Oregon

The topic for today, "Creative Faith," offers so many different approaches that we scarcely know which one to take, but whichever approach we do take, the end is the same—a realization that the two words, "creative" and "faith" are not widely separated words. We find

¹ Mrs. Anderson is the wife of the president of Linfield College. She is a graduate (B. A.) of Cornell University and of the University of Chicago (M. A.). The years 1918-1926 she spent in China, where she and her husband were missionaries of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. She has written many articles, stories and pageants for various periodicals, and is the teacher of the Conquest Class of the McMinnville Baptist Church School.

¹ Professor Stillman is director of the School of Social Administration in Ohio State University. He is the author of *Social Work Publicity*.

rather that they are two facets of one experience. Creativeness presupposes faith, and faith manifests itself in creation.

Taking Paul's definition of faith, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), we see that in the very act of exercising faith we have begun to create; things not seen by the eye are evident to the spirit of faith, and from that evidence they become substance.

"But," some of you say, "all of this is too philosophical. Words, words, words!" Well, then, let us get back of the words.

There's that cake you baked yesterday. It stands in your pantry now, ready for the eager appetites of the dinner-hour. Yesterday morning that cake was a thing not seen, but certainly a thing hoped for—especially by your children. But to you, I am sure, it was as much in evidence as it is today; as real as it is now. You purposed to make it; you had faith that you could; you gathered together your bowls and spoon, sugar and butter and eggs; and all the time you were sifting and stirring you saw that cake as it now is. Faith and creation merged.

"But," you say, "it doesn't take faith to create a thing you've created over and over again." No, not conscious faith, but faith made habitual is faith just the same. If you still pucker your brow in doubt, recall the time when you first made that cake. Was ever an act more faith-full than that first trial? Was ever a creation more marvelous than that first frosted cake?

Or are you unable to remember your first cake? Perhaps you had so often watched your mother make that same cake that the memory of your own first trial is blurred in other memories, and your faith in your own cake-making ability so merged with hers that you cannot now separate them. Fortunate you!

But if you cannot isolate your first cake, you can, perhaps, remember your first successful pie or dress, knitted sweater, written composition, typed essay, or self-planned room—something you yourself did that stands out by itself, unblurred by other memories. Always your faith ran ahead of that finished product; always creation followed faith.

And—and here is one forward step—the more faith you exercised the more truly yours was the creation. Wasn't that so? On the day that you put aside all cake recipes and made up your own, baking a cake no one had baked before, you were pushing your faith out upon its own. On the day when you said, "No, I won't buy a pattern for Susan's new dress; I can see just how I want to make it myself," you were dressmaking in faith. And as you sewed the seams and saw the substance of the thing you hoped for manifest itself to Susan's wondering eyes, your heart sang and you knew the thrill of creation. Susan and her friends were surprised at the

finished garment, but you weren't; you had known it from the beginning.

A while back, I said "Fortunate you!" And fortunate indeed are you, if your present successful cake-making is an outgrowth of those happy hours when you witnessed the creation of wonderful "cakes that mother made." Such memories are blessed, and all such training is incalculably precious.

But even more fortunate are you if your present Christian living is an outgrowth of those hallowed hours when you witnessed creative faith in the wonderful Christian life of mother or father, sister or brother, pastor or friend. Fortunate you, if in youth you came close to a person whose faith in the things of the spirit became the very essence of those things. Fortunate you, if because you knew such a person, your life today is a witness for the reality of joy and peace and forgiveness and love.

But, even if you did not know such a creatively faithful person, the joyful privilege of yourself becoming such a person is always yours, through Christ. You who have already put faith to the test know why I say, "joyful privilege." To you who have not ventured forth, we who have say, "Come! Follow Christ. Launch out upon your faith. Know the thrill of seeing spiritual things before they are manifest to others."

"Words, words, words!" Again I hear some of you say this! And again, I say to you, "Well, then come back of these words." There's the wrong our friend has done us. It burns in our hearts, it makes bitter all the hours of the day. Let us try forgiving her. Say, "She knew not what she did"; or even, if we must, "Yes, she did know, but I'll forgive her, anyway." Let our faith in a forgiving God lead us into this new country, and see how this faith creates a life of victory.

Or it may be that bit of gossip we repeated yesterday morning. Toward evening we found it was not true. Let us hurry over to confess our mistake, to rectify the damage done. Then let us hurry back again to make for ourselves a quiet time in which to ask God to fortify our hearts in forgiveness against a repetition.

Or it may be a fear that is dwarfing our lives. Let us hear, with the ears of faith, Jesus say, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27). Let us take his words on faith and be witness for the joy and peace created in our lives.

Creative faith! How many, many approaches that topic offers! And how surely all approaches lead to God, the faithful Creator of the universe!

Finally, is not all real faith creative? Paul speaks of the "godly edifying which is in faith" (1 Tim. 1:4). Notice that Paul's kind of faith "worketh in love" (Gal. 5:6).

The Lesson Illustrated

Susanna G. Fisher

CHANGING PASTURES

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee (Gen. 12:1).

The *Expositor* supplies the following: A picture represents a boat laden with cattle being ferried across an angry, swollen river in a time of storm. Judging from the threatening clouds and the play of the treacherous lightning, one would conclude that the poor dumb cattle were marked for destruction. But the title of the painting is simply "Changing Pastures." Many times we imagine that God's plans mean disaster and affliction, but he is simply "changing pastures" for our good and the welfare of our brethren. Experiences of peril and anxiety often lead to a fuller and more precious knowledge of Christ's protecting power and to a trust in him that brings calmness and peace to the soul.

STEP BY STEP

So Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him (Gen. 12:4).

How large a part of our Godward life is traveled, not by clear landmarks seen far off in the promised land, but as travelers climb a mountainpeak, by putting footstep after footstep, slowly and patiently, into the prints which someone going before us, with keener sight, with stronger nerves, tied to us by a cord of saintly sympathy, has planted deep into the pathless snow of the bleak distance that stretches between humanity and God. So we ascend by one another.—*Phillips Brooks.*

ABRAHAM'S PILGRIMAGE

He knew not the path where he wandered;

He knew not the journey before,
As the days of his pilgrimage lengthened

And life to its eventide wore;
And oft by his tent on the desert

He dreamed of the way he had trod
Ere he sought for the beautiful city
Whose builder and maker is God.

Above were the stars for his compass,

Beneath him the Syrian sands,
And only a promise to lead him

Through dreary and desolate lands.
Who doubts that his faith must have
wavered

As he wandered with weariness shod,
In quest of the glorified city

Whose builder and maker is God?

He lay by his tent in the even;

And o'er him night's pageantry rolled,
The stars in their crystalline orbits,

The moon down a highway of gold;
And ever he heard it, the whisper,

"Press onward o'er pathways untrod;
There waits you the wonderful city
Whose builder and maker is God."

—*Alfred J. Waterhouse.*

LESSON VI. MAY 9. THE MINISTRY OF INTERCESSION

Genesis 18. (Verses printed, Gen. 18: 17-32)

GENERAL THEME: ABRAHAM A MAN OF PRAYER

Prepared by MITCHELL BRONK, D.D.

Devotional Reading for the Opening Service: 1 John 3: 21-24

KEY VERSE: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.—James 5: 16

17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far

from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all for the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

30 And he said unto him, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

The patriarch's fondness for this spot is shown by the fact that here he buried Sarah. It thus became the burial place of the family (23: 17).

The Lesson Before Us

I. ABRAHAM AND HIS VISITORS

Among the nomadic tribes of Syria and Arabia hospitality to strangers is not only universal, but a preeminent virtue, almost a religious act. No matter how evil-minded and murderous a sheik, a humbler Bedouin, you are tolerably sure of polite and kindly entertainment in his tent home.

"The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre" (vs. 1), in this wise then it goes on to tell of the three men. Did Abraham recognize them as heavenly visitors? Probably not, at least not at first. They will have been to him merely three dusty, tired, hungry wayfarers, eager for an invitation to share his tent's shade and refreshment.

"Entertaining angels unawares" is a beautiful and meaningful expression. Abraham learns its truth. Little by little his eyes are opened to discern in his guests no ordinary pilgrims.

II. TAKEN INTO GOD'S CONFIDENCE

Abraham's lavish hospitality goes beyond the limit of accompanying his guests a bit along the way, when they take leave. And now he comes to the complete realization of what before he had suspected: that the most distinguished of the three is more than a mere man, and more than an angel; that it is none other than the Lord himself, in human semblance. While the two others proceed on their way down toward Sodom, the mysterious One tarries for more intimate conversation with the patriarch.

The Psalmist says (25: 14), "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him"; or in Moffatt's rendering, "Those who revere the Eternal have confidence." Abraham fulfils in a striking way this condition, and to him God discloses an awful providence that he contemplates. We tell such matters only to our most intimate friends; henceforth the patriarch shall be known as "Friend of God."

A dreadful thing must be done with wicked cities down there in the Salt Valley. In one of them Abraham's kinsfolk have taken up their abode. Moreover, he has been made a prophet, for the ages; an interpreter of religion of the will of God, to mankind—"the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him" (18: 18)—accordingly, he must be taught, must be prepared to explain God's ways to the world.

A Bible Message for Every Day

Monday. God's Confidence in Abraham. Gen. 18: 16-22. "For I know him." We speak thus of some man or woman to whom we are about to commit some trust. May our lives be so integral (*integer vitae*) true to God, that he will be able to say it of us!

Tuesday. Abraham's Confidence in God. Gen. 18: 23-33. When his grandson wrestled that night by Jabbok ford (32: 24), was he thinking of his ancestor's tenacious hold on God? (Heredity?)

Wednesday. Friends of Jesus. John 15: 14-19. Abraham believed unto action; the Twelve were giving Jesus a similar faith. That is why they were his friends. Are we for the same reason?

Thursday. Praying in Faith. Mark 11: 20-24. But it mustn't be just faith, faith in general; it must be faith in the heavenly Father's love for us (so, "every good and perfect gift"); and his wise use of his almightiness—so, many of our petitions denied.

Friday. Perseverance in Prayer. Luke 11: 5-12. It also sifts our petitions. Sometimes you have to pray for a thing seven times before you realize that a good and wise God couldn't give it to you.

Saturday. Acceptable Prayer. Acts 10: 1-6. "Thy prayers and thine alms." Maybe the one pushes the other up to God.

Sunday. Joyous Communion with God. Ps. 34: 1-8. Must not praise of God—or any part of worship for that matter—be joyous? If it is not, are we rightly appreciating God and his goodness? And will it not then be insincere?

At the Threshold of the Lesson

This whole chapter 18 is remarkably realistic, and true to the picturesque life of the East. Those familiar with Bedouin life tell us that the scene that it brings before us could be exactly reproduced at the present time. It is very anthropomorphic; that is, the Lord is represented not only as appearing in an unmistakable human form, but as doing about everything that a man would do under similar circumstances.

Abraham seems to have remained his lifelong a wandering tent-dweller, whose country and city were always "of promise" (Heb. 11: 9). His favorite camping-place, which will gradually have become a more or less permanent home to him, was that part of Hebron known as "the terebinths" (oaks) of Mamre.

In particular, he was to "command his children and his household after him" in the way of the Lord, start them on the path of righteousness and justice. The doom of the wicked cities of the plain would be a terrible but effective reminder. The patriarch-prophet would explain the meaning of the catastrophe: The wages of sin is death!

We should remember that at this time these people had, so far as we know, no formulated laws of morality and religion, and therefore needed impressive object-lessons. Nor, alas! has mankind even now outgrown such need. Sodom and Gomorrah are names that doubtless will have to be repeated as long as our race endures—at least as long as sin is in the world. So the divine purpose is made known to Abraham. "Surely, the Lord God will do nothing, except he reveal his purpose to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7, J. M. P. Smith).

III. ABRAHAM PERSUADES GOD

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Here we have a good illustration of it. This colloquy between the patriarch and God that at first thought strikes one as curious, and naive, is really most impressive; it is touching; it is tremendous praying.

The Hebrew sheik knows himself God's friend, or he would not talk to God that way. Withal he knew more about God than most of our modern theologians—for he had gone deeper into God's heart than many of them have. He has all the confidence in the power of prayer that Jesus said Christian faith should have (Matt. 17:20), and his passionate concern for the innocent souls that might be found in the wicked cities is true Christian love.

Abraham's particular problem is one that was constantly troubling religious-minded Hebrews: the fate of the righteous among the wicked when divine chastisement must be meted out. It is one of the themes of the Book of Job. Jonah thinks that it is no more than right that he should be thrown out of the endangered ship.

Abraham's pleading is based upon two elements of his faith: that God is perfectly just, and that he does not act arbitrarily. All true prayer must be similarly grounded. The world for which Christ died was like Sodom and Gomorrah, pretty bad, but it was worth saving. Maybe God should have destroyed it, but there was a pleading, pre-ailing love that sent it a Saviour.

"Shall not the Judge of the whole earth himself act justly?" is a better rendering (so Meek) of verse 25. A. B. Davidson comments: "The fact that God is God does not withdraw him and his actions from the sphere of moral judgment. Nothing would be right in God because he is God which would not be right in him were he man." Man's goodness must at least be like God's.

Practical Questions for Class Discussion

- ¶ Prayer is of course a spiritual force; and have we any right therefore to think of its results exclusively in material terms?
- ¶ From the context, and what we know of him, do you think that Abraham, as he pled with God, could have voiced Jesus' "Not my will, but thine"?
- ¶ He seems to us rather familiar, bold, does Abraham, almost profanely so. But do not some of our prayers go to the opposite extreme? Let us not forget that it is God a Father to whom we are praying; just as Abraham was praying to a God Friend.
- ¶ May we not suppose that God likes the thoroughgoing, persistent, holding-on spirit? We do. In business, everywhere, we think that it wins out.
- ¶ Why should God bother to answer the half-hearted prayer, or open his hand to the solicitor who will not take the trouble to come a second—or a hundredth—time? "If it's worth the having, it's worth the asking," we say.

Notes and Comments

"Here stand these Old Testament worthies, a great cloud of them, ready to testify to the fact that it is possible to live under the compelling urge of the faith principle. Abraham did it, Noah

did it, hosts of others did it (cp. Heb. 11:32). So can we."—W. S. Abernethy.

In Genesis the form Abram is used up to 17:5; thereafter always Abraham. The name is undoubtedly of Babylonian origin, with the meaning "father-lover." In Hebrew it would signify "exalted father," or perhaps "the Exalted One is my Father." The lengthened spelling might be a dialectic variation; but the sound of the Hebrew syllables is employed significantly in the divine renaming (17:5). It is interesting to note that in the kindred Arabic, the word for multitude is *ruham*.

"Ab" is "father" in the Semitic group of languages, and to the Hebrews our patriarch is ever "Father Abraham"; regarded as the real progenitor, ancestor, founder of their race. They are known as "the seed of Abraham" (Ps. 105:6; John 8:33, 37; 2 Cor. 11:22) and their God as "the God of Abraham" (Exod. 3:6, 16; 2 Chron. 30:6; Acts 3:13). The New Testament looks back upon him as, with the possible exception of Moses, the outstanding personage in the Old; his name occurring in the Gospels and Epistles not less than seventy times.

"Why do you not talk with God as freely as did Abraham? Oh, friends of God, why do you not make more of your transcendent privilege? Why do you not talk to him about all that wearies and worries you, as freely as Abraham did, telling him about your Ishmaels, your Lots, and his dealings? Why do you not fall on your faces while God talks with you? Life should be one long talk between God and us."—F. B. Meyer.

TEACHERS' HELPS

In the Men's Class

Charles C. Stillman, Columbus, Ohio

ABRAHAM A MAN OF PRAYER

It is plain from the story in the lesson Scripture that Abraham had great love for humans. No doubt he wanted the unrighteous saved for the sake of the righteous. He seems, however, to identify himself with the inhabitants of the city that God will destroy because of their great wickedness. He loved these people and he had the ability to project himself into their situation. He had imagination. I am reminded of what Shelley says in "A Defense of Poetry:" "The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man to be greatly good must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination."

Grand old Abraham gives a fine demonstration in diplomacy. It seems that the old city was rotten to the core with sin. He, however, was sure that there must be some good there. At least there should be. Reverently he argued with Jehovah, "If there are fifty righteous in the city, you will save it, will you not, Lord?" If there are forty righteous, what then? Thirty? Twenty? Ten? There must be *ten*, he said to himself; and the city will be safe.

The gap between imagination and faith is not very broad. I visited the office of the executive of the Community Chest in Columbus on the afternoon of December 31. A beautiful poster on his wall attracted my attention. "Where did you get it?" I said. He replied, "From a department-store right here in town." The picture was of a boy, with yearning in his countenance. In the background appeared the objects of his dreams—professional situations, commercial conquests, services rendered, fame and honor. It was beautiful artistry. To the department-store it was one of a series designed to stimulate the purchase of goods for growing youth. To

the Chest executive it typified the kind of moral values he hoped to render through social work organizations affiliated with his Community Chest.

Give us faith to make our dreams come true. I have greatly enjoyed reading *The Cruise of the Dream Ship*, by Ralph Stock. The opening paragraph goes:

"We all have our dreams. Without them we should be clods. It is in our dreams that we accomplish the impossible; the rich man dumps his load of responsibility and lives in a log shack on a mountaintop, the poor man becomes rich, the stay-at-home travels, the wanderer finds an abiding-place."

Faith is a sanctified imagination, and imagination is woven in and out with dreams. Prayer is the spark that puts faith in motion. The homeliness and commonness of the following lines need not shut out the aptness of the derived analogy between faith and the gasoline of an automobile:

"I cranka de car,
Bawt she won't run,
These automobile
Shes a stop in da middle,
She a stop da middle
Of da streta up town.
I look in da carburator,
But shes a no drawn,
I pusha da clutch,
Shaka da wheel,
Knocka da brake,
Da horn I feel.
I look in da tank,
What I see—yas!
Sawn of a gun!
Shes a outa da gas!"

Victor Hugo said, "The soul is the reality of our existence." There may be metaphysical mysteries in the statement, but to me the words suggest that what God means us to be lies somehow commingled with those visions we see, those ideals we cherish, those dreams we experience, when faith is vibrant in our hearts and when, with the faith, the diplomacy, the reverence, the persistence and the courage of Abraham, we plead with God for the salvation of men engulfed in social slime.

A charge brought against education today is that it is discursive, uncorrelated, and lacks a unifying core. The charge is well founded. The same may be said of theology. We victims of a loose civilization need to maintain a life of integrity; and integrity means the "state or quality of being complete, undivided, or unbroken." How can we do it?

According to John Frederick Vichert, of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, the whole development of architecture gathers around these three things: To enclose a space, to support a weight, to adapt a structure to desired ends. What do you mean, Professor Vichert? The Cologne Cathedral, Saint Peter's and the Taj Mahal—all these comprehended in

such simplicity? It seems that you are right.

Likewise, life may be simply justified and accounted for. Complex it is, to be sure. Think not that Abraham had no troubles. Faith did for him. Faith will do for us. Let us pray!

Before My Class of Women

Colena Michael Anderson,
McMinnville, Oregon

Debating is in the air. For the past weeks we have been steeped in it. And as I began to consider the "Ministry of Intercession" for today's article I found a question for a debate forming itself, and likewise an urge pushing me on in search of information out of which arguments might be created. So strong was that urge that this article now bears its form, and that which follows is raw material for you who choose to take the affirmative side. I make no apologies for not furnishing material for the negative side, because you see, I'm on the affirmative!

Resolved: That Christians should give renewed attention to the ministry of intercession.

Source Material: The stuff out of which arguments are to be formed:

I have been benefited by praying for others; for by making an errand to God for them I have gotten something for myself" (Samuel Rutherford, 1600-1661, Scotch clergyman).

Now add to this your own testimony on the benefits you have received when you have prayed for others.

No man can hinder our private addresses to God; every man can build a chapel in his breast, himself the priest, his heart the sacrifice, and the earth he treads on, the altar" (Jeremy Taylor, 1613-1667, English Bishop).

They say that Martin Luther, when he felt particularly strong, would exclaim, "I feel as if I were being prayed for."

Can you add some proof from your own experience, when you felt like this, or when a friend for whom you were praying felt renewed strength at the time of your praying?

Every prayer that is really such—that is, which flows from the inward necessity of the soul—God answers" (Hermann Olshausen, 1796-1839, German exegete).

Search your own experience to see if this be true. Are you willing to share your answer with the class?

Robert McCheyne, a Scotch preacher was an ardent practitioner of intercessory prayer. When he died some one said of him, "Perhaps the heaviest blow to his brethren, his people, and the land is the loss of his intercession."

Is our prayer life so vital that others will say this of us when we die?

Cromwell, 1599-1658, English statesman a few days before his death prayed: "Lord, though I am a miserable and wretched creature, I am in covenant with thee through grace. And I may, I will come to thee, for thy people. Let however thou dost dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for the world. Give them consistency of judgment, a heart, and mutual love; and go on to deliver them, and with the work of reformation; and make the name of Christ glorious in the world."

Would that the world had more saints and men of intercession!

Every good and holy desire, though it lack form, hath in itself the substance and force of a prayer with God, we regardeth the very meanings, groans and sighings of the heart" (T. Hooker, 1586-1647, English-American Puritan divine).

Do we still believe this?

Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath sired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31, 32).

Is it possible that not only Jesus' life upon Peter (Luke 22:61) but also the intercessory prayer of Jesus for him caused Peter to weep bitterly and sacrifice himself for his future devotion to the cause of Christ?

So weak is man, so ignorant and blind that did not God sometimes withhold mercy what we ask, we should be ruined at our own request" (Hannah More, 1745-1833, English author).

There is a refutation in this for those who say, "God does not answer our prayers."

I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day" (Abraham Lincoln).

Does our wisdom ever seem insufficient for our day?

Our prayers must mean something to us if they are to mean anything to God (Maltbie Babcock).

Is there in this statement a possible reason why some of our intercessory prayers go unanswered?

No explanation, however reasonable can do justice to the experience of carious praying" (Harry Emerson Fosdick).

The Lesson Illustrated

Susanna G. Fisher

UNRECOGNIZED BLESSINGS

My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee from thy servant (Gen. 18:3).

No wonder many of us are so poor in spiritual things. To our doors evermore come the heavenly messengers, their hands laden with rich blessings which they wish to give to us. But we are so intent on our earthly ambitions that we do not see them, nor open our doors to them, and waiting long in vain, they at last turn sadly away, leaving us unbled in our poverty. If we would put train ourselves to take whatever gift God sends to us, we should soon become rich. God's blessings are ever at our doors. He is the giving God. The trouble with us is that we do not always recognize the blessings when they are offered us. Some of the richest of them come in the form of pain, struggle,

and sorrow. Let us learn to accept God's gifts, whether they shine in joy, or are veiled in shadows.—J. R. Miller, D. D.

THE RIGHT RING

But Abraham stood yet before the Lord (Gen. 18:22).

There is a well-authenticated story which relates how a private who was seen to steal out of camp every night into the depths of a piece of woods near the camp was watched and at last arrested on the charge of being in secret correspondence with the enemy. The man was a member of a Highland troop in the British army, and the penalty for his offense was death. Short shrift was

likely to be given him, but the man protested earnestly that he was innocent of intentional wrong-doing, and only went out into the woods to be alone to pray. The stern Scotch captain knew a good test for that story. "Down on your knees and pray, then!" he ordered. "You never needed it more in all your life." The story tells how the man knelt and poured out his soul as one prays who looks eternity in the face. Tears started in the eyes of the rough men who listened, for his petition had the right "ring" to it, as even the old captain agreed after a few minutes. "Let him go," he muttered. "A man couldn't pray like that unless he'd been regular to gospel drill."

LESSON VII. MAY 16. PROMOTING PEACE

Gen. 21:1 to 25:18; 26:1-33. (Verses printed, Gen. 26:12-25)

GENERAL THEME: THE FORBEARANCE OF ISAAC

Prepared by MITCHELL BRONK, D. D.

Devotional Reading for the Opening Service: Matthew 5:1-12

KEY VERSE: Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.—Matt. 5:9

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundred-fold: and the LORD blessed him.

13 And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:

14 For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

15 For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

17 And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham, his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the

valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is our's: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.

21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

24 And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

are better things than his for you to seek. How about "the kingdom of God and his righteousness"?

Saturday. Jealousy and the Mob Spirit. Acts 13:44-50. That's one bad thing about it, it is contagious (cf. Prov. 27:4). But why may we not "sublimize" this vice into a godly desire for all the Christian graces that our brother or anyone else possesses?

Sunday. Conditions of Blessedness. Matt. 5:1-12. Happiness—"Blessed! Blessed!"—is the predominant note of this important section of Jesus' teaching. But notice that these Beatitudes are loaded and conditioned with injunctions; some of them pretty severe and demanding. "Full of beauty the path of duty"—but none the less a path of duty.

At the Threshold of the Lesson

The Abrahamic clan were still semi-nomads; not always on the go, indeed; they would spend months at one of the family's favorite haunts, like Hebron or Beersheba; but when there was a drought or famine, or they learned of a locality with better pasturage, they would pack up and migrate. They didn't have housefuls of furniture to hold them fast!

"Valley of Gerar" (vs. 17) would be the district around that city; scarcely a valley; rather a brook bed, or wadi. Gerar was in the extreme south of the land of the Philistines.

Abimelech may have been a dynastic name, like Pharaoh and Caesar. The territory of this prince was so vaguely demarcated that he would be unable to prevent another people, like the Hebrews, from occupying it. Moreover, the two tribes were friends, after a fashion. Abimelech, or a man of like name, had entered into covenant with Abraham (21:22-34).

A Bible Message for Every Day

Monday. Isaac Envied. Gen. 26:12-5. With good reason is envy made one of the seven deadly sins. At any rate, it is the beginning of infinite trouble, and especially of no end of unhappiness, or the one who cherishes it.

Tuesday. Isaac Wins by Yielding. Gen. 26:17-25. "Dig another well" (vss. 21, 22), would be a good sermon text, or an excellent life motto, or a new national creed.

Wednesday. Joseph Envied by His Brothers. Gen. 37:5-11. We talk too much, especially about ourselves. A few

people will be interested in our prosperity and successes, but for the most part choose some other subject. That is Christian unselfishness.

Thursday. Living Together Peaceably. Rom. 12:17-21. From both non-Christians and Christians Paul got a good many hard knocks. Provocations fairly rained upon him. But how wonderfully he lived up to Jesus' teaching of forbearance and forgiveness! And he wrote First Corinthians 13!

Friday. Saul Envy David. 1 Sam. 18:5-9. There are lots of things for you to "get"; why worry about your brother's things? And probably there

The Lesson Before Us

I. ISAAC'S PROSPERITY

Abraham had nominally preempted certain parts of the land by the quasi-legal procedure of digging a number of wells. These wells the Gerarites had filled with earth and rubbish while the Hebrews were sojourning elsewhere (cp. 2 Kings 3:25).

The region is even now very fertile, and the Arab farmers of today often have wonderful crops. Things went very well indeed with Isaac's harvests, flocks, herds, household. The way God prospered him reminds us of the First Psalm. Naturally, it excited the jealousy of the Gerarites. Abimelech evidently wanted to be friendly, but his herdsmen and shepherds didn't. He suggested to Isaac that it would be the wiser course for him to move on, and so avoid the risk of trouble. "You are too great a man for us" (vs. 16, Moffatt).

II. THE CHARACTER OF ISAAC

It is a come-down from Abraham to this mediocre son of his. Isaac's life and personality seem unimportant against the magnificent background of the father. It frequently happens that way with fathers and sons. Perhaps he was kept overlong in tutelage. He was forty when he married. Still, there is much that is attractive in Isaac. His name, "laughter," has a pleasant sound. He was of a loving, lovable, gentle, happy, dreamy disposition. His duplicity with Abimelech and some of the episodes in his family life are another story. But—

These Old Testament worthies were heroes of faith, not saints. They were not perfect. And the Bible honestly tells us the bad of them as well as the good. Original sin did not pass any of them by. But the point is, their lives were preponderantly good. When they fell they straightway got up again. Through all their failings they kept the faith. For their remarkable devotion to the Lord and his righteousness, we leave aside their divagations.

Anyhow, it is not for us, with their example before us, and our Christian gospel, and its centuries of influence, harshly to condemn them. They can teach us a thing or two about morals and religion. We may believe that when God judged them he saw their lives as splendid wholes, offset only slightly by acts contrary to his holiness. And so he surrounded them with his particular care and showered upon them his blessings.

Isaac receives considerable mention in the New Testament; especially in Galatians, where Paul uses him and his mother as allegorical representations of Christians who are justified by faith in the promise of God and are freeborn heirs of the spiritual inheritance implied in that promise (Gal. 4:21-31). We find other Christlike traits in Isaac—gentleness and forbearance, for example.

III. WATER AND WELLS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the poetry of the Old Testament and everywhere in the Bible water is a magic word. To be where there is plenty of it is one of life's dreams and longings. The very word water becomes a symbol of joyous existence. The ancient Hebrews depended largely upon cisterns—their word *be'er* means either cistern or a well dug in the earth—but there is frequent mention of wells in the Bible.

The man who dug one was regarded as a public benefactor. Its completion and dedication would be celebrated with appropriate ceremonies. In Numbers 21 we have preserved an old well song used at such functions. Sometimes a well became famous. They were usually the center of the community life. They would be named, just as ships are and buildings used to be.

IV. ISAAC'S WELLS

It would be an act of filial piety for Isaac to reopen the wells that his father had dugged and rechristen them with the names the father had used. The name of the second well, Sitnah, "enmity" interests us because it is practically our word Satan (vs. 21). The well of verse 19 would be one that struck an exceptionally rich vein of water.

V. ISAAC'S NON-RESISTANCE

Was it mean and cowardly of him repeatedly to give way before the Gerarites? (Vss. 17, 21, 22.) The biblical account implies that it wasn't; for God's blessing continued to follow him. There are two ways of treating aggressors. Isaac's way seems to accord pretty well with Jesus' teaching. It usually produces the best results in the long run.

He was an acquiescent man; not an admirable type, perhaps; but things move on in this world a great deal smoother than else they would because there are lots like him. His spirit more akin to the Sermon on the Mount and the Gethsemane prayer than that of many an Old Testament worthy.

VI. ROOM! Vs. 22

God always has Rehoboths, "broad places," free from strife; "somewhere else" for the man who yields. This word Rehoboth, meaning "room," "plenty of space," "broad places," always has for me a pleasant sound. Some of my ancestors participated in the settlement of Rehoboth, Mass. Separatists and Baptists, they had been pushed out first from England, then from the orthodox-minded colonial settlements; but in their new home there was plenty of "room" for their distinctive views and practices—for soul liberty. With this verse 22 of our chapter before them, it is no wonder they named their town Rehoboth.

VII. AT BEERSHEBA. Vs. 33

Another favorite halting-place of the clan of Abraham. The word means

"well of covenant" (21:31). It came an important holy place, being grouped by Amos with Bethel and Gilgal (Amos 5:5). Here theophanies were granted to Hagar, Jacob and Elijah. In the familiar expression "from Dan to Beersheba" it is marked the southern boundary of Palestine though the actual border was six miles farther south, at the River Egypt.

The meaning of God's revelation to Isaac at Beersheba is this: For the sake of peace he had departed from the territory over in Gerar, to which he felt that his tribe had a clear title, and from all the prosperity that was coming to him there. He was weary of wrangling over the wells; and weary wandering; and discouraged. It's easy job being a hero of faith! The God comes to him with cheer, assurance and promises; just as he repeatedly came to the discouraged, knocked-about Paul; just as he is always coming to his faithful ones in their heavy hours.

The promises are a repetition of those made to him before (26:3, 4) and repeatedly made to Abraham. Notice how God says his good things over and over again. He is bound we shan't forget them! Repetition is one of the characteristic and fine things about the Bible. Many of Jesus' important messages kept repeating. We think of the hymn "Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life!"

Practical Questions for Class Discussion

- ¶ Isaac has sometimes been taken as a type of Christ. In what respects?
- ¶ What principle is involved in Isaac's surrender of the wells?
- ¶ Can you illustrate good and bad results from such yielding?
- ¶ That word Rehoboth, "room" (vs. 22), suggests the matter of territorial expansion, that is becoming a serious world problem "a place for the sun"—Germany, Italy, Japan. What must be the guiding Christian principle here?
- ¶ Did Jesus advocate non-resistance? Wasn't it rather "positive resistance"? "Your coat"; that is non-resistance; but Jesus says, "cloak also." To go the mile commanded is non-resistance; but Jesus says, "go another."
- ¶ Non-resistance usually fails, doesn't it? Why not try this "positive resistance"?
- ¶ Do you think that the man who is faithful to God is always—usually—blessed of God? (Vss. 13, 14.)
- ¶ Notice the great benefits that Isaac conferred upon others, even after he was dead, in these wells that he dugged. Dig wells! Leave a trail of blessings behind you through life. Being dead, speak!

Notes and Comments

It's easy enough to pick a quarrel, and it's easy enough to get along with people; to run into fights, and to keep out of them. There is a story of two monks who had gotten along so pleasantly together for many years in their intimate convent life that they thought it would be nice to have a quarrel, for a change. Day after day they tried, but in vain, to have a disagreement about something. When they gave it up, Isaac's and Abimelech's retainers wrangled over the wells; they themselves simply couldn't;

they were such sensible, good-tempered men. Remember that peace-making gets for one the title God's child (Matt. 5:9).

Jesus' word at that other well; Isaac's son's: A Bible-study group of college girls were discussing the familiar passage in the Sermon on the Mount, and were asking why Christians are—or should be—like salt. Of course they thought of salt's preservative qualities. But a Chinese girl who was there quietly suggested, "Salt creates thirst." Do our lives create in others the thirst that only the Water of Life can satisfy, or instead, the thirst for base, sinful things?

TEACHERS' HELPS

In the Men's Class

Charles C. Stillman, Columbus, Ohio

THE FORBEARANCE OF ISAAC

If the head of another nomadic clan had asked Isaac how he was getting along, Isaac could have replied, honestly, "I'm doing very well, thank you." "Plenty of grass for the cattle and deep?" "Tolerably good," said Isaac. "How about water?" To which our biblical patriarch replied, "Yes, we're getting water all right, but we have to dig for it."

Read 26:13 and 14. The peculiar, petitious style of early Hebrew is inked to drive home the thought that this man Isaac was really prospering:

"And the man waxed great,
And grew more and more,
Until he became very great:
And he had possessions of flocks,
And possessions of herds,
And a great household.
And the Philistines envied him."

You and I are familiar enough with human nature to know that success is often obtained at the price of envy. But why Isaac got along so well and the Philistines, his neighbors using the word "neighbors" in the sense of vast, open spaces, rather than of restricted city blocks) fared less well, I am not sure. Maybe Isaac and his numerous kin were more industrious; maybe he knew more about animal husbandry; or maybe he had become expert in the selection of land for grazing purposes. Scripture claims it by saying that he was blessed of God. At any rate, the other fellows did not like it.

The situation was so serious that it demanded official notice. Abimelech, king, took a hand in it. This Abimelech appears to have been square. But many of the Philistine herdsmen were not actors. They filled up the wells in which Isaac and his clansmen were depending for water. Finally the king had a talk with Isaac, and I judge from the chapter that the conversation was something like this:

ABIMELECH. My overseers report having had trouble with some of your men.

ISAAC. Yes, I have heard of it. In fact, in a few cases there has been physical violence.

ABIMELECH. It must stop. What do you think is the cause of it?

ISAAC. Well, I do not particularly want to complain, but somebody is busy filling up the wells that have been yielding water ever since they were dug by my men—rather a scurvy trick.

ABIMELECH. Isaac, we do not want trouble with you, and I do not want enmity between my men and yours to lead to open hostilities. The fact is that the birth-rate in your clan is alarmingly high and the death-rate is noticeably low. Your tribe is getting so numerous that we are outnumbered. Your herds and flocks are increasing at such a rate that we are alarmed about grazing-grounds and the water-supply.

ISAAC. What do you think should be done about it?

ABIMELECH. Why don't you go down to the valley of Gerar? It is said that the land there is good, and water can be had for the digging.

ISAAC. What about the herdsmen of Gerar?

ABIMELECH. Well, all I can say is that your father Abraham led his people through that country. You are able to look after yourself, and I have confidence enough in your forbearance to believe you will be able to handle the situation with essential justice to all concerned.

ISAAC. We start tomorrow.

All was not rosy in the valley of Gerar, where Isaac encamped and dwelt. Abimelech was right—Abraham had been in this country. He had dug wells. But the Philistines had filled them up.

Episode No. 1. Isaac prospected around the valley till he found water. The well was made usable. The herdsmen (prototype of our modern "cow-punchers") of Gerar claimed the well. In accordance with Oriental custom, Isaac named the well. With grim humor, he named it Esek, and *esek* means

"contention." Appropriate name—very. What did Isaac do? Forbearance! He moved on.

Episode No. 2. "And they digged another well." These herdsmen of Gerar were as active as a constable with an eviction notice. Their behavior was obviously indicative of a strong desire to possess this well. What did Isaac do now? Forbearance! He yielded and moved on. His sense of the fitness of things did not fail him when he named this well, for he called it Sitnah, which means enmity.

Episode No. 3. Isaac's commissary department moved on. After a while they found water and consummated a well. This time the herdsmen of Gerar "strove not." When it became apparent that this well could be possessed in peace, Isaac gave a suitable name—as I think we all will agree—for he called it Rehoboth. Now Rehoboth means "room," or "open spaces." The triumph of his forbearance enabled him to say, as he named the spot, "Jehovah hath made room for us and we shall be fruitful in the land."

The forbearance of Isaac must have had a severe test. It was hard in ancient times to find locations for hand-dug wells. Even today, with well-boring machinery, the process is not easy. The ancients, however, had learned the art of digging wells. Joseph's Well, in Cairo, is well known; two hundred and ninety-seven feet deep; for more than half its depth, eighteen by twenty-four feet, and for the remainder nine by fifteen feet.

Isaac's prosperity incited envy and opposition; his forbearance was the forerunner of his triumph. Please note: Which requires the greater courage—to live at peace, or to be cantankerous?

Before My Class of Women

Colena Michael Anderson,
McMinnville, Oregon

Years ago, when Eleanor H. Porter's *Pollyanna* was the new book of the hour, readers of it had their attention directed to a bit of biblical statistics which many of them would otherwise never have known. Some of you, no doubt, may remember the figures to which I refer, and can now give them without having to look them up again—as I have had to do. The statistics come in a statement of Pollyanna to the Rev. Paul Ford, the minister who was so discouraged over the tumult in his parish that God's children had wrought.

Pollyanna tells him that her father was always glad he was a minister; "but 'most always he said, too, that he wouldn't stay a minister a minute if 'twasn't for the rejoicing texts."

When the Rev. Paul Ford asked, "The—what?" Pollyanna answered: "Well that's what father used to call 'em. Of course the Bible didn't name 'em that.

But it's all those that begin, 'Be glad in the Lord!' or, 'Rejoice greatly!' or, 'Shout for joy!' and all that, you know—such a lot of 'em. Once, when father felt specially bad, he counted 'em. There were eight hundred of 'em."

Eight hundred! I still remember pausing after having read that. I have never heard or read of the genesis of Eleanor Porter's *Pollyanna*, but I venture a guess that its origin may be traced to just those figures. To a writer obsessed with the significance of the number of times such terms as "Be joyful," "Rejoice" and "Be glad," are used in the Book of Books, there might readily come the inspiration to translate that obsession into words and make of it a story. What Eleanor Porter has done with the "joy" and "gladness" of the Bible some other writer should do with the "peace" of the Bible.

In a small concordance that I have I find that the references to "peace" and its cognates amount to an even hundred. And these, I know, are but a part of all that the Bible has to say about peace, for many of the references will be listed under other words in the passages that have to do with peace.

One hundred! Bare figures? Yes, indeed, bare figures—baring the very heart of God. Peace, peace, peace! The Bible is full of references to peace. The Bible with its great revelations of God to the human heart pictures the beasts of the field at peace with men (Job 5:23). Modern cameras, those great inventions of human mind, picture men of the world at war with one another.

Paul was forever admonishing the early Christians to follow after the things that make for peace (Rom. 14:19); to live in peace (2 Cor. 13:11); to let the peace of God rule in their heart (Col. 3:15); to be at peace among themselves (1 Thess. 5:13); to follow peace with all men (2 Tim. 2:22).

And yet today how far the world at large is from this peace! Is it because the world at large is far from the heart of God? And is the world at large far from the heart of God because you and I do not always stay as close to him as we should? Of this we can be sure—the whole can be only what its parts are.

Jesus said, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another (Mark 9:50). He thought of salt and peace as closely allied—salt, the necessity for physical life; peace, the necessity for spiritual life. The heritage he left us was peace: "Peace I leave unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace" (John 16:33).

What is the heritage we plan to leave to our loved ones? A life-insurance, real estate, stocks and bonds? Or are we without silver and gold, and yet able to give that which silver and gold cannot buy? Are we, as mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, now creating a heritage akin to that which the Master left, a

heritage that may also stand for our memorial, far more enduring than any memorial of granite or marble, a heritage of peace?

Last November our daughter Frances had the opportunity to have Thanksgiving dinner with her paternal grandfather in San Diego. That evening her grandfather, two aunts, two uncles, and four cousins attended the service in the little Swedish Baptist Church that her grandfather loves. There he testified to his humble gratitude for the many blessings that had come to him, all undeserved he said. He alluded with deep feeling to the peace he had in his heart, the peace that passeth understanding. That same evening in his little cottage they all knelt in family worship, and the peace of which he had spoken in church came to brood over them all as they knelt in prayer.

When Frances returned she told us of this experience. As she did so her face shone. I could see that her grandfather had already divided unto her his living. And I knew that the division of his substance was far more valuable and more enduring than that which the father of the Prodigal Son had divided into that son.

As I saw the light upon my daughter's face I asked myself, "Am I now insuring my life against an hour like this? Am I filling it with the peace that passeth understanding so that some day I, too, may leave it for a heritage?" The answer I was forced to give made me more than ever grateful for the "forgiveness" which lies close to "peace" in the heart of God.

The Lesson Illustrated

Susanna G. Fisher

WATER FOR THE THIRSTY

And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water (Gen. 26:19).

In a lonely pass of the Blue Ridge Mountains there is a small but beautiful spring, whose water is cool and sparkling, and is believed to have healing qualities. It is called "Aunt Polly's Spring," because a half-century ago, according to the current story, an old woman of that name used to sit beside the spring all day long with a tin cup, which she filled with the refreshing water and handed to each passing traveler. She made no distinction among those to whom she ministered, no matter whether well dressed or ragged, pleasant or repulsive, if they were thirsty and would accept the water they were welcome. Pay was sometimes offered her, but this was always refused; for the good soul believed and affirmed that as soon as the water was sold the healing-power would go out of it. Is not this a picture of the spirit which should animate all Christians in relation to those about them whose souls are famishing for the water of life?

NEVER LONESOME

Fear not, for I am with thee (Gen. 26:24).

A young man was conducting a poor weak little country Sunday school ten miles back in the woods, having to drive alone over about the worst road I ever saw, a journey requiring three hours each way under best conditions. He had tried in vain to get somebody to go along with him to help in the work, and occupy the vacant seat in the buggy, but there were various excuses made, and he was alone.

One day I asked him, "Don't you feel lonesome on this long drive?" "No," he said, "I thought at first I would, but when I go by myself it seems that the Lord occupies the empty seat beside me, and oh! we do have some great times together."

And I could believe it, for truly there was a good face to look upon, and joy was contagious. It was not hard for me to imagine him, with lines showing the horse picking its tedious way homeward late in the night, and to see the boy's smile of deep satisfaction as the Sovereign Companion "sat with him." Onward.

ALONE WITH GOD

And the Lord appeared unto him the same night (Gen. 26:24).

To be alone with God gives balance to life. We should not allow our philosophy of life to become one-sided, distorted, and out of balance. In order to keep the mental, moral, and physical phases of life well-balanced, it is necessary not only that we develop the mind by adequate education, and employ in commerce and the industrial activities of life the most efficient methods, but also—if we are to paralyze the moral sensibilities of the soul and lapse into mere industrial commercialism, and materialism—that we get away from the crowd, separate ourselves from men and things, and retire to some sacred, secluded spot where the silent but eloquent tongues of nature speak to us, where we can have uninterrupted communion with our inner self, and give the soul a chance to feel that there is a God. The man or the woman who does not occasionally go alone with nature, the soul, and God, sustains incalculable loss and misses one of the higher and more profitable experiences of human life.—D. O. Teasley.

HATRED SPOILS LIFE

Wherefore come ye to me, seeing I hate me? (Gen. 26:27.)

Whatever be the cause, right or wrong, that makes us dislike or seek to injure by act or speech, this at least is a fact that any sort of hatred indulged in its way to a foremost place in the mind grows more and more insistent till it colors everything and spoils everything. It leaves its trail over the whole.—Hugh Black.

LESSON VIII. MAY 23. CONQUERING APPETITE AND GREED

Gen. 25: 19-34; 26: 34, 35; 27: 1-46. (Verses printed, Gen. 25: 27-34; 27: 41-45)

GENERAL THEME: THE WEAKNESS OF ESAU

[This lesson written by KENNETH C. MACARTHUR, M. A., B. D., Sterling, Mass.]

Devotional Reading for the Opening Service: Hebrews 12: 14-17

KEY VERSE: Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things.—1 Cor. 9: 25

25: 27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.
28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he loved to eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.
29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:
30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.
31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.
32 And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?
33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.
34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread andottage of lentiles; and he did eat and

drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

27: 41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

42 And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

44 And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

45 Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived of you both in one day?

like the outdoor man whom he was destined to become.

Esau prefers the wild life of the chase to the quiet routine of farming. He is the rough-and-ready, bluff, impulsive, adventurous man, easily moved by his passions, rather than by premeditated plans for gain. We still find the two kinds of men; neither wholly admirable, neither wholly at fault. Perhaps the feminine heart inclines more to the "cunning hunter, the man of the field," than to "the plain man, dwelling in tents"—which were the houses of that day. Yet much of the supposed admiration for the "cave-man" is nonsense.

The Lesson Before Us

I. ESAU'S FATAL MISTAKE

On one occasion, the elder brother has ill success with his hunting. He comes home faint and tired, and his hunger becomes overpowering as he smells the savory odor of the lentil soup his crafty brother is boiling. He is so ravenous that he demands, literally, "That red—red-thing!" as if he could not wait to recall the proper word; says he is dying of hunger; and so sells his birthright to satisfy his appetite, although he probably could have had food in a few minutes anyway.

II. THE BIRTHRIGHT

The elder brother was entitled to precedence, authority, after his father's death; perhaps also a double portion of patrimony. The domestic priesthood was included, and the covenant blessing with the promised land of Canaan for his children—and a blessing "to all the families of the earth" (Deut. 21: 17; Num. 3: 12).

All this the famished Esau throws away for the sake of immediately satisfying his hunger.

III. AN UNWISE MARRIAGE

Esau marries two Hittite women, "which was a bitter disappointment to Isaac and Rebekah" (26: 35, Moffatt). No doubt the parents were influenced by the belief in endogamy, or marriage within the tribe, of which we see examples in the marriages of Isaac and of Jacob; but we can sympathize with Rebekah's words in Genesis 27: 46, for the customs and religion of these Canaanitish women will have been different from those of the Hebrews.

IV. ESAU IS DEFRAUDED OF THE BLESSING

The Hebrew words for birthright and blessing are similar in form and prac-

Bible Message for Every Day

Monday. A Man of Appetite. Gen. 27: 34. Esau was like the modern man who says, "I'm just dying for a drink." Although he said he was "at the point to die," he doubtless would have survived had he not made his rash gain. Hunger, like other bodily appetites, has to be controlled.

Tuesday. A Man of Anger. Gen. 27: 45. Even though Jacob had played the scurvy trick on him, there was no justification for his murderous hatred. People who lack self-control in one respect of their lives are apt to in others.

Wednesday. Bodily Discipline. 1 Cor. 9: 22-27. This athletic illustration was especially applicable to the Corinthians, since the Isthmian games were held in their vicinity; but it also appeals to us moderns, who know the importance of training for contests. The Christian life requires a like discipline for success.

Thursday. Weakness of the Flesh. Matt. 26: 40-46. Jesus seems surprised, perhaps hurt, that the disciples were sleeping during such a crisis in his life; but he makes allowances for the weakness of the flesh. Sometimes strict Christians err in not, with sympathetic imagination, putting themselves in others' shoes and realizing that "the flesh is weak."

Friday. Ruling One's Own Spirit. Eph. 6: 16: 27-32. People who will not restrain their hasty speech, break up friendships. Peace of mind, happy relations

with one's associates, and practical efficiency, all accompany the calm, controlled temper.

Saturday. Slaves of Appetite. Isa. 56: 9-12. The greedy leaders of Israel have neglected their responsibilities because they are slaves of strong drink. Many people today who boast of "personal liberty" are really captives of the appetite for alcohol.

Sunday. Victory Through Christ. Rom. 8: 31-39. The whole history of the church, down to the present, abounds in examples of those who have overcome persecution, suffering and temptation with the help of the Lord Jesus. Those who wholly give themselves to him find the means of triumphant living. "My strength is sufficient!"

At the Threshold of the Lesson

A contrast in types of men. Biologists tell us there are two kinds of twins, the fraternal, who are no more alike than any two persons with the same parents, and the identical, who resemble each other so strongly that "each brother can use the other as a mirror to shave by." These two sons of Isaac and Rebekah evidently belonged to the former class for they are sharply contrasted from birth.

Jacob catches the heel of his brother, as though trying to be the first born; hence he is called "the Heel-Catcher," or Supplanter. He shows the acquisitive nature; while from infancy, his elder twin brother Esau is ruddy and hairy,

tically identical in meaning. The blessing was perhaps the most significant part of the birthright. When the wily Jacob, aided by his mother, deceived Isaac and tricked his brother out of what belonged to him, we can sympathize with Esau's resentment. Considering their rough, nomad life, we are not surprised that he planned to kill Jacob, as soon as his father should die. By such a murder he thought he could regain what he had lost.

Years later, however, when Jacob returned with his numerous family, his flocks and herds, Esau's better nature asserted itself and he freely forgave his brother.

V. A NEW TESTAMENT ESTIMATE OF ESAU

In *Hebrews 12:16, 17*, we have the key to Esau's personality, in his characterization as "profane." He was unconsecrated and secular, without any of that following of the divine guidance that meant so much to Jacob, bad as he, Jacob, was in many ways. Esau's life was directed by impulse, rather than by principle, and he seems to have given little or no thought to spiritual blessings or high ideals. He was doubtless more concerned over the "fatness of the earth, the corn and wine," and the homage which the birthright and blessing involved, than he was over the spiritual.

Esau is typical of a multitude in our day who are "good fellows" enough, but who live in a tawdry secularity, oblivious to higher values. They are willing to starve their souls, if they can gratify their bodily appetites. He represents for all time the "worldly" man. Though physically strong, and brave in the chase, he was morally a weakling.

Esau has become the symbol of the man who sacrifices self-respect and the esteem of his fellows, to say nothing of higher spiritual satisfactions, for fleeting sensual pleasures, which may be followed by misery, self-loathing and vain regrets—when it is too late. Many today sneer at old-fashioned morality, sow their wild oats, and in the end find they have sacrificed character for a mere "mess of pottage." Next to hunger, the sex instinct demands gratification, and some justify licentiousness on the ground that there is psychological harm in resisting this desire; yet the welfare both of society and the individual demand the control of this instinct; and of other powerful impulses; for instance, acquisitiveness, and experience shows that this also can be controlled, and must be, if one would be a permanently happy, well-adjusted individual.

The writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* tells us that Esau "found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." We may understand by this that he tried to find some way to undo the rash acts of his youth, but to his bitter regret could not. So the consequences of foolish action are often irreparable.

Practical Questions for Class Discussion

- ¶ How can we conquer appetite and greed? Consider "the expulsive power of a new affection." Can the aspiration toward the things that are true, honorable, lovely and of good report, the things of virtue and of praise, overcome less worthy urges?
- ¶ Another way of victory is absorption in useful activities. Some people are just too busy to yield to temptation. Read *Second Maccabees* in the *Apocrypha* (in some old Bible) and learn how the Jewish hero armed his followers with "good words" and a dream (15:11).
- ¶ Is it a Christian duty not to let ourselves get too tired? Do we sometimes find ourselves like Esau, exhausted, hungry, and hence with our moral tone relaxed? Have you ever noticed that under such circumstances people are cross, irritable and lacking in self-control?
- ¶ What do you think of the American woman swimmer who broke training on her way to the Olympic games, in the summer of 1936, and so lost her chance to compete? Was this yielding to appetite and greed a modern selling of birthright?
- ¶ What objections are there to marrying persons of other races and religions? Were Esau's parents justified in being grieved by his Hittite wives?
- ¶ Isaac seems to have made Esau his favorite because of his greed for savory meat. Was Rebekah also guilty of favoritism? Discuss the effects of partiality on the part of parents toward their children.
- ¶ Every athlete knows that if he is to succeed in competitive sports he must discipline himself in regard to

food, drink, sleep and exercise so that he may attain maximum efficiency. Paul, who was familiar with the Greek games, uses this "training" as a symbol of the Christian life. Do you think we ought to regard it with at least as much seriousness as a young man does a football game or a track meet? Mention some kinds of spiritual "training."

Notes and Comments

We barter life for pottage; sell our bliss

For wealth or power, for pleasure or renown;

Thus, Esau like, our Father's blessing miss,

Then wash with fruitless tears our faded crown.

—Quoted by Marcus Dooley

"Self-conquest is the greatest of victories."

"Wisdom does not show itself much in precept as in life—in a business of mind and mastery of appetite." —Seneca.

It has been said that the *Arabic Nights* is the best commentary on the Old Testament; whether or not we accept this statement, we must recognize that the Hebrews and the Arabs had many ideas in common. Among them was the belief in the power of the spoken word. The cave opened when Baba said, "Open Sesame!" It could not help it. So blessings and curses, once uttered, were, according to primitive ideas, powerful and could not be revoked, it made no difference whether the blessing had been obtained. To understand many of the earlier narratives of the Bible we must think ourselves back into antiquity's ways of looking at things.

TEACHERS' HELPS

In the Men's Class

Charles C. Stillman, Columbus, Ohio

THE WEAKNESS OF ESAU

How about the weakness of Jacob? In the interesting situation presented in this Scripture for today, neither one of these boys acquitted himself creditably.

As we use our imagination and try to project ourselves into the picture, we see a tired, exhausted hunter, coming home with an empty game-bag, his nostrils quivering and his mouth watering at the sight of savory food. That is Esau. We look again and we see a leisurely, industrious, home-type man cooking a plainsman's mess of odorous stew; and sensing the plight of his elder brother. That is Jacob.

I do not want to defend Esau, nor do I want to attack Jacob. I do want to

object to the implications of many comments on this text that condemn Esau without a hearing, and exploit Jacob as an example of attention to duty. What are the facts?

Esau was the heir apparent. He was intrepid, bold, daring. He liked to hunt. He was the favorite of his father. For his father, greatly supplemented by the love of the chase, took him to the mountains and plains to secure for his father the kind of food his father relished—game and spicy flavor of game.

Jacob had what the psychologists call a "mother complex." Contrasted with Esau, Jacob was a "sissy." He and his mother plotted together to circumvent the rightful heir. Jacob should have been highly commended for his attention to the flocks and herds, but he should have been (at least, may be) somewhat commiserated for his lack of romance.

Jacob had the poise to make life safe and secure: Esau had the spring and vigor to make life colorful, interesting, and sometimes very difficult. Esau had a voracious appetite, Jacob had a mutton's appetite. Esau was impulsive and nimble as a deer, Jacob slow and ruminative as a sheep. We need, and must have, both, a little of Esau (not too much) and a little of Jacob. The balance is salutary.

Somehow or other I feel a bit sorry for Esau. He was a big, hairy-chested specimen. It seems obvious that his intellectual powers were far behind those of his brother Jacob. He was weak—there is no doubt about that. Physical weakness tends to create a condition of irresponsibility. And, for the moment, he was physically weak; the account says so. "Give me some of that stew, Jacob, for I am literally famished; in fact I feel faint."

Somehow or other I feel resentment for Jacob. What should a brother have done? Well, he should have done just the opposite of what Jacob did do. This meddling, selfish, unbrotherly herdsman and the almost unthinkable effrontery to say to Esau: "I tell you what I'll do, Esau. I'll give you all the stew you want to eat." "Thanks, Jacob, I knew you would." "On one condition, Esau, and that is that you surrender to me all your right of inheritance." Then Esau said: "I am so famished that I shall eat if I do not get food; all right then, give you my birthright." Using his wits and discarding his decency, Jacob did in effect (bringing the scurrilous transaction down to date): "Hold everything for just one moment. Wait till I call in a notary, get some witnesses, and obtain the signature in legal fashion." Then he added—to himself—"This is a lucky day for me."

Self-preservation is the first law of nature. There are times when we have to consider things realistically. This was one of them. Esau was "all in." Under such conditions, the obvious action is often the wrong action.

Two or three days ago, I was approached by a young Jewish student, of culture and intellectual attainments. He wanted to interest me in a project along the line of vocational training. "This is not vocational training in the usual sense," he said; "it is an effort to face realistically the difficulties besetting Jews and Negro students in locating jobs, when their qualifications are demonstrably equal to those of Gentiles and whites." As the conversation was continued, he pointed out that the temptation to resort to trickery and political maneuvering in order to win fair treatment is becoming increasingly hard to resist. As we judge people's motives and behavior under the stress of trying conditions, we need a fervent spirit of charity. So with Esau.

No doubt we all are familiar with human affairs wherein a gem was traded for a bauble. The old trick of unscrupulous pioneers in this country was

to fill Indian chiefs with "firewater," catch them off guard, and secure valuable concessions. Law recognizes the invalidity of such procedure. Custom condones it in many of its variations. I file an exception to the alleged integrity of Jacob. Esau consummated a horrible bargain. I condemn his rashness, his yielding to the exigencies of the moment. But I can understand it.

Before My Class of Women

Colena Michael Anderson,
McMinnville, Oregon

Chinese art is full of symbolism. One cannot pick up a piece of embroidery, tapestry, or wood carving without finding a number of symbolic motifs worked into the design. In many cases every part of the design is a symbol. One of the symbols used on the early bronzes was the *T'ao t'ieh*, the Beast of Greed. This was always represented as a creature with two enormous eyes and two large, strong jaws armed with curved tusks. Some of the bronze caldrons with this *T'ao t'ieh* design came down to us from the Shang Dynasty (1766-1122 B. C.). They can be seen today in museums and in the homes of art-collecting friends. Chinese legend says that this creature of greed actually existed at the time of Emperor Yao (2357-2255 B. C.), but was banished from the realm by Emperor Shun (2255-2205 B. C.), who, like David of old, was called from the fields to assist Yao. Or it may be that the *T'ao t'ieh* was annihilated in the great flood which occurred during Yao's reign.

Today, however, even though there is no living creature in China that looks like this ogre of gluttony, the design is preserved. It is repeated on modern brasses, and in some places it is still used on the inner side of the shielding "spirit walls" that are erected before the main entrance of the official buildings. Standing as a symbol of greed, appetite and avarice, the *T'ao t'ieh* on these walls is full of significance. What symbol could be more appropriate for such a place! By its very hideous aspect it must claim the attention of the officials as they enter and leave the *yamens*, and so give them a stern warning against these vices.

In many cases these *T'ao t'ieh*s have been replaced by the crossed flags of the Republic, symbolizing patriotism, or a large red sun symbolic of brightness and purity. These modern symbols are positive suggestions toward good, while the older symbol was a warning against a great evil. Both have the same purpose; both aim at the development of the "superior man."

It is of interest to note that in 1930 (and perhaps still in 1937) the figure of a sacrificial caldron bearing the mask of the *T'ao t'ieh* was worked in relief on the hilts of the swords used in the Chinese navy. An old, old symbol on the hilts of fresh, new swords! Some day I must find out where these new swords

came from. I say, "some day," thus making it comfortably indefinite, for I fear a probing into the question might reveal the disturbing truth that those swords, or at least the raw steel for them, came from our own "America the Beautiful." And, further, I might be forced to acknowledge that the image of the *T'ao t'ieh* on those swords is but the outward manifestations of the inward heart of that steel. When the steel for a sword, or any other weapon of war, leaves our shores it is already saturated with avarice. It goes forth to help brother nations fight against brother nations. And the engraver who traces the *T'ao t'ieh* upon such a sword has an easy task; all he has to do is prick the hilt ever so little, and the released beast leaps forth, leers with protruding eyes, and all but licks its powerful jaws in anticipation of gluttonous warfare.

And what of the young Chinese sailors and soldiers now being forced into military training? My heart grows heavy as I think of them, for among them even now are some of our own friends, and the young sons of our dearest Chinese friends. I imagine them cleaning their swords, and stopping in their polishing to say, "The *T'ao t'ieh*! Grandmother taught me that this is the embodiment of avarice. She ever warned me that I must be on my guard against it. But how difficult it is to kill greed when I have such a shining new sword in my hand!"

Two thousand years before Christ pagan China knew the dangers of appetite and greed. Two thousand years after Christ Christian nations are urging her on to forget their danger—and their sequel, awful war; fire and the sword.

The Lesson Illustrated

Susanna G. Fisher

NO SNAILS

And he sold his birthright unto Jacob
(Gen. 25:33).

There is an old legend of a swan and a crane. A beautiful swan alighted by the banks of the water in which a crane was walking about seeking snails. For a few moments the crane viewed the swan in stupid wonder and then inquired

"Where do you come from?"

"I come from heaven," replied the swan.

"And where is heaven?" asked the crane.

"Heaven!" said the swan. "Heaven! have you never heard of heaven?" And the beautiful bird went on to describe the grandeur of the heavenly city. She told of the streets of gold, and the gates and walls made of precious stones; of the river of life, pure as crystal, upon whose banks is the tree whose leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. In eloquent terms the swan sought to describe the other world, but without arousing the slightest interest on the part of the crane.

Finally the crane asked: "Are there any snails there?"

"Snails!" repeated the swan. "No, of course there are not."

"Then," said the crane, as it continued its search along the slimy banks of the pool, "you can have your heaven; I want snails!"

This fable has a deep truth underlying it. How many a young person to whom God has granted the advantage of a Christian home has turned his back upon it and searched for snails! How many a man will sacrifice his wife, his family, his all for the snails of sin! How many a girl has deliberately turned from the love of parents and home to learn when too late that heaven has been forfeited for snails?

CHOICES

What profit shall this birthright do to me? (Gen. 25:32.)

When the Confederate cause was lost

and General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox, he faced the question of his own future. It is said that an English admirer offered him an annuity of fifteen thousand dollars and a country seat in England. He was asked to head a colony in Mexico. The Louisiana Lottery offered him ten thousand dollars a year simply for the use of his name. A great insurance company asked him to be its president at a princely salary. The lottery offer he spurned; the others he declined, saying, "I must stay and share the fate and fortunes of my people. I have led the young men of the South in battle; I have seen many die on the field; I shall devote my remaining energies to training young men to do their duty in life." One autumn day in 1865, seated on his veteran war horse, "Traveler," Lee rode into the secluded little town of Lexington, Va., to take charge of Washington College. The col-

lege was bankrupt and inefficient. The trustees were not certain, but they said they would try to make the salary fifty hundred dollars a year. Every great soul has its testing. In this critical experience Robert E. Lee turned resolute from self-interest to heed the call of his people and his God.

WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

A little boy was on the scales, and being very anxious to outweigh his playmate he puffed out his cheeks and swelled out like a frog. But the playmate was a wiser boy. "Oho!" he cried in scorn, "that doesn't do any good; you can only weigh what you are!" How true this is of us bigger children who try to impress ourselves—and, yet sometimes God Almighty—by the virtues we should like to have! It doesn't do any good, "You can only weigh what you are."—*Selected.*

LESSON IX. MAY 30. FACE TO FACE WITH GOD

Gen. 28:1 to 33:20. (Verses printed, Gen. 28:16-22; 32:24-30)

GENERAL THEME: THE REMAKING OF JACOB

Prepared by MITCHELL BRONK, D. D.

Devotional Reading for the Opening Service: Psalm 32:1-5

KEY VERSE: Be ye not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.—Rom. 12:2 (R. V.)

28:16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Friday. Facing Godward. Luke 11:11-20. No Christian is Janus-faced; therefore it is impossible for him to look in two directions at once; it is either-or, the far country, or my Father's house. He can go back, but cannot go backward.

Saturday. The New Man. Eph. 4:17-24. As silly as it is to put on one suit of clothes over another, is the effect that some people make, to put on the new man—in Christ Jesus—over the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. First "put off" that old man (ver. 22).

Sunday. Joy in Being Forgiveness. Eph. 32:1-5. "How good it seems to go home," we often hear folks say. If you have made even a little journey into the "far country," from the Father's house, are you not happy to be back, the wandering and the sin all forgiven?

At the Threshold of the Lesson

Jacob is one of the Bible's stumbling blocks. The teaching value of his life and experiences is, however, inestimable. He rightfully belongs among the heroes of faith of the Old Testament, yet there is no easy undertaking to reconcile his faith-goldliness with the meanness, duplicity and downright dishonesty that repeatedly exhibited. To say the least there is little about him that is admirable. He is splendid sermon material, yet preachers find it difficult—embarrassing?—to preach about him. He is a fine example of the Bible's frankness and honesty.

A Bible Message for Every Day

Monday. Jacob's Dream of God. Gen. 28:16-22. Every journey, every entrance upon new scenes and new experiences, should make us thoughtful and sober-minded—leading to new revelations of God.

Tuesday. Jacob's Experience of God. Gen. 32:24-30. Is that the God we experience, one who wrestles with us? Yes, sometimes; for we must be "tried

out"; and he must be Victor, have the upper-hand.

Wednesday. How to Know God. 1 Cor. 2:9-14. "The indwelling of the Holy Spirit"—only thus can God make us know that we are his, and all the rest about himself and our relation to him (cf. Rom. 7:16).

Thursday. Seeing God. 1 John 3:1-5. John here echoes his Master's word: "The pure in heart, they shall see God." And "as he is" (vs. 2).

The Lesson Before Us

I. THE LADDER VISION. Chapter 28

This is one of the most familiar, beautiful and instructive passages of the whole Bible. It has been the theme of countless sermons, poems and pictures. Every word and incident have worked themselves into the religious thought and romance of all time. And why? Because it teaches us that heaven and earth are joined; that the awful gulf between God and man that the sin of Eden made has been bridged. Sarah Flower Adams' restatement of it in "Nearer, My God, to Thee!" has come to be regarded as the greatest hymn in Christian literature; and one never sings those verses without a vivid mental presentation of it all; the night, the stone pillow, the sleeping prophet, the ladder, and the angels.

It is a prophetic vision, or vision of prophecy. The earth-heaven stairway is not yet; or is not yet complete; or is only a dream-stuff thing. But the Messianic Saviour off there in the future will actualize it. Hence this vision of the patriarch is rich with meaning—to the Christian; who blends into it that other ladder, that for him touches heaven, the cross of his Lord Jesus.

It was a long journey from Beersheba to Haran; more than four hundred miles. The young man was going wooing, but was also fleeing from the just wrath of his brother. We wonder what his thoughts and feelings were as he went that northern road down which his grandfather Abraham had first come to Canaan years before.

Did he know of Bethel from Abraham's camping there (Gen. 12:8); and intentionally make it his night's rest? It is difficult to say, from the narrative, but one may suppose so. It was evidently already a famous shrine.

Bethel was twelve miles north of Jerusalem. It is described as "a lonely, rocky place, occupied (today) by a little hamlet, Beitin."

El (Bethel, "house of God") is the oldest and the general divine name. In compounded names it is placed either before or after the other word (e. g. El-sha, "God is salvation").

In the neighborhood of Bethel there are rocky formations suggestive of a stairway. As the weary Jacob dozed off he may have been looking upon such a nature of the landscape. Was he also thinking how his devout grandfather had the time communed here with the Eternal? He may have been lonesome and homesick in the strange place.

Was his guilty conscience troubling him, reminding him that he had been separating himself from God by his conduct? For God builds up our dreams and visions out of the material of our consciousness and subconsciousness, out of impressions received recently or long ago.

A stone for a pillow strikes us as

rather incongruous. But many people who have tried it and accustomed themselves to it say that such a head-rest is to be preferred to any other. The moral has sometimes been drawn that too comfortable positions, literally and figuratively, are not conducive to devotion! "Stairway" is better than "ladder" (vs. 12. Moffatt has "flight of steps").

That the angels were ascending and descending has sometimes been taken to signify tasks completed and fresh commissions from above; or, prayers offered and answered. We are reminded, also, of John 1:51.

Four blessings are promised (vss. 13-15): (1) Canaan; this was really a renewal of the promise to Abraham in 13:15. "Thee" and "thy seed" would be all one to Jacob. (2) A multitudinous posterity—regarded by the Jews as a very great boon (cp. 13:16). (3) His family to be made a blessing to all the world—the Jews the religious teachers of humanity? (4) Divine care, protection, guidance, in rich measure. Was it strange that in the face of such promises Jacob should feel an awakening that the Lord was there, that the place was indeed a *beth-el*, a house of God opening into heaven?

It was a common belief among the Jews that it meant death actually to come in to the presence of the Eternal (Exod. 20:18, 19; Judges 6:22, 23). Naturally, then, Jacob trembled at the thought that he had been face to face with God. Yet "How dreadful is this place!" is better rendered, as by Moffatt, "What an awesome place!" The house of God should always be an awesome place—but never a dreadful one.

The Hebrew word for "pillar" (vs. 18), *mazzebah*, denotes an upright stone which usually stood by the side of the altar. It was a sacred memorial of some striking religious experience at that particular sacred place. In recent excavations in Bible lands many of these *mazzeboth* have been found, some in place. Their condemnation in Deuteronomy 16:22, may apply to their consecration to heathen divinities; for compare Genesis 31:45, Exodus 24:4, Joshua 24:26, where they seem to be regarded as proper and legitimate sacred objects.

Jacob's pledge to give tithes (vs. 22) is another evidence of the antiquity of this custom in religion (cp. also 14:20).

II. THE WRESTLING. Chapter 32

The wrestling at the Jabbok ford should always be kept in mind in judging Jacob. It is in a certain sense the key to his character, from the religious point of view. It is symbolical of his whole life, which was one continual wrestling-match; his better with his baser self; or, God in him fighting down the devil in him.

Was Esau hurrying northward with his four hundred retainers in a hostile mood? Evidently Jacob thought so. Esau has heard of his brother's remarkable pros-

perity and that he is returning to southern Palestine with a great company of his people and great possessions of live stock. He is naturally distrustful of his brother, remembering his actions of the earlier years, and will be on his guard. As he draws near, however, God stirs new feelings and dispositions in Esau's heart toward Jacob, of forgiveness, of brotherly affection. This returning wanderer is, after all, his twin!

That wrestling in the dark (vss. 24-32) and all its strange agitations had brought Jacob into a better relation with God. We may not enter into the experiences of that night, but it is evident that the victory there won was intended to bring him into better relations with his brother. Marcus Dods comments: "The preliminary fight is always with God. He comes in between us and all men and things. For in wronging them we have wronged him."

There is a persistent determination to win out: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me" (32:26). That the struggle ended only with the break of day might signify that only as an old man was there for him any semblance of real moral victory. Hebrews 11 glorifies his dying faith ("worshiped leaning upon the top of his staff").

Jacob is fearful, apprehensive, suspicious. He makes ready to placate Esau with rich gifts. Among the Orientals the acceptance of a present is a proof of friendship; in the case of an enemy, of reconciliation. The division of the live stock intended as the gift, and also of his people, into groups, arranged along the road would be an ingenious way of impressing his brother (32:16-19). Jacob is always resourceful! In case of attack, on the other hand, only the foremost groups need be sacrificed. Love for Rachel and her son predominates!

The brook Jabbok cuts its circuitous way for about sixty miles down through the steep hills of Gilead, flowing into the Jordan about three miles below the traditional site of Peniel. The language implies that Jacob approached his brother bowing low to the earth at frequent intervals; an Oriental expression of obsequiousness. The Tel el-Amarna tablets speak of a Canaanite king who addresses the King of Egypt: "At the feet of the king, my lord, seven times and seven times do I fall."

III. THE RECONCILIATION. Chapter 33

It is fine that the alienated brothers can come together in this wise, after twenty-five years of separation. That fourth verse (chapter 33) is a moving one, in its beautiful brevity. As we read it we forget the shortcomings of each. In an especially pleasing light does the good nature, forgiving disposition and magnanimity of Esau stand forth. The tears that they shed washed away the selfishness and sin of Jacob, "the Supplanter," and make him worthier to bear that new name that he had won in the wrestling. "Prince of

God." The cross likewise teaches us that reconciliation is a princely act.

Practical Questions for Class Discussion

- ¶ Can you think of places where it has seemed to you that God was especially near to you?
- ¶ Do you have this feeling in churches? In what sort of churches?
- ¶ Should you say that there is a connection between men's thoughtlessness and neglect of God and their lack of visions of God—in our day?
- ¶ What should you say of the morality of bargaining with God, as Jacob apparently does here? (Vss. 20-22.)
- ¶ As you study his life, do you find Jacob a disagreeable person, as he is often said to be? Do you like Esau better?
- ¶ Why do we think of heaven as up above, and speak of angels coming down to us?
- ¶ Will a man who is intensely religious be likely to have some very pronounced bad traits?

Notes and Comments

Notice that Jacob's life was in its totality a constant struggle upward, toward righteousness and God. And that is what counts with God. Not the man who never falls and fails, but he who presses on over his mistakes and

misdeeds is God's hero. There were two Jacobs, just as there are two of each of us. His name, "supplanter," may have the higher signification; the nobler self finally supplants the baser.

Everywhere in the ancient world there were sacred places that had become such because they had been the locals of revelations, of deep religious experiences, to which people on this account made pilgrimages, and at which they tarried for "incubation"; that is, repetition for themselves of the divine manifestations; somewhat as I get a blessing when I go to church, just from being there.

"Jacob got his new vision, which meant for him a new start in life, a new inspiration to push onward and upward. It was a real conversion."—J. Ross Stevenson.

Dr. Lynn H. Hough has remarked: "That such a brain as Jacob's, full of selfish thoughts, could dream such a dream is not logical, but is human. And the fact that Jacob is so human, so akin to many of us, helps give this story its universal popularity. To us, as to him, the way heavenward is not a chariot-ride, but a ladder-climb!"

"I have been thinking much lately of Jacob's wrestling with the angel; finding his weakness and his strength at the same time, and going on through the rest of his life halting and rejoicing. I believe this is the one great lesson of life; the being subdued by God. If this is done all else is subdued."—Dr. John Brown.

TEACHERS' HELPS

In the Men's Class

Charles C. Stillman, Columbus, Ohio

THE REMAKING OF JACOB

It is very fortunate that there is no finity in life. Our tomorrow will not be our today. Our today, however, shapes our tomorrow. Habits register in the structure of the brain, in muscular accommodation, and in the fiber of the soul. One way to forecast a student's success is to watch his academic grades. A better way is to know his attitude toward life—honesty, industry, courtesy, aggressiveness, daily behavior, the development of personality. Lindbergh was a poor student, but he was poor only in the established curriculum. He was active and alert in the field of his consuming interest. I know a college dean who eloped early in his career and was married. He "raised the deuce" generally during his student days. Yet I do not recommend that formula as conducive to success. He soon found himself, dug in, devoted himself to his studies, and by hard work wrote books recognized in his field, and now creditably assumes important official duties. Remaking of human beings has often taken place under our very eyes.

The Jacob of last Sunday's lesson is a different Jacob from him who lay on the ground with a stone for a pillow and dreamed of the possibilities of communication between heaven and earth; from him who deliberately planned to make amends for the unjust treatment previously given to his brother Esau; from him who wrestled with a man "until the breaking of the day," clinging to God lest haply God escape from him; from him with his new name Israel—"he striveth with God." No wonder Jacob had fear of Esau. His conscience was lashing him. The heavenly vision was his remaking.

Men, we need Bethels and Peniels in our busy lives. It is necessary to see visions in a Bethel, the house of God; and it is necessary to wrestle with spirit in Peniel, seeing God face to face.

I suppose Jacob was his own general manager. He must have been tolerably busy with affairs pertaining to flocks and herds. Esau, in retribution, had threatened Jacob's life. Esau was getting mixed up with the daughters of Heth, trying to combine oil and water in an impossible domestic emulsion. Fearing for her favorite son's life, Rebekah contrived to have Isaac send Jacob to his maternal grandfather, "to

take a wife of the daughters of naan." The behavior of our hero Jacob does not stand up well, if judged by the highest Christian standards. It does appear, however, that he had learned how to relax and commune and seek to hear the voice of God.

Most of us are fearfully busy with committee meetings, engagements, social functions, and are "in conference" often that we have no time to meet God. Not that we should turn ourselves into mystics, but that we should tune hearts and minds to those finer promptings of the Spirit keenly sensed by one who seeks the Lord while he may be found.

I have never been in Japan. A traveler writes that it is the custom of many of the better class of homes to put one picture on the wall—one obviously worthy of study and contemplation. Though many pictures may be stored away, the reception-room holds but one at a time. The idea of course is that the vision may not be disturbed by less details. What a great idea! We that we could apply some such technique to our daily living!

The junior dean of one of the colleges in my university states that many freshmen are flunking out of college because they are "in love." In this coeducational institution an impressionable young man and woman experience a time-consuming satisfaction in an atmosphere of extraordinary congeniality. The young man, when away from his newly found friend, "moons" and muses to a degree that interferes with his power of concentration—that is, on anything except the flurried state of his own heart. My own school memories put me in a position to understand exactly what the dean is talking about. Rightly controlled, such musings may be converted into real inspiration for better work.

Concentration on the prosaic things of life may be as fatal as emotional immersion in an *affaire du cœur*. In judgment, there is such a thing as an indulgence in religion. Some monastic orders seem to me to illustrate the folly of the contention. Life, however, ought to be permeated with this urge to know God, a leaning out of the soul to commune with our Father.

Life is like a music-score. Flats and sharps and accidentals occur. The composition may be an arpeggio. It may be one of augmentation, or of diminution. The music may be played with a turn of the trill. It may be pianissimo or fortissimo. It will always be according to the rules of melody, rhythm and harmony, but it may appear in one of many keys. Never shall we be all alike. Let us help us to live in harmony with him who sets whatever key our lives may be set, so possible to be in tune with the Lord, the Master of us all. We need visions. We need to pause and rest a while. May the contemplation of Jacob's ladder help us to establish more realistic relations in our communications with the infinite.

Before My Class of Women

Colena Michael Anderson,
McMinnville, Oregon

One spring day, a few years ago, as I was looking out of the window of the bus on which I was riding and which I stopped for a moment to let off a passenger, I saw by the roadside an early daisy. Something about its appearance made it seem more than a flower; something about it reminded me of a young child. There was that in its look which breathed of bewilderment and surprise. You who have seen a baby wake from sleep and rub its eyes, and then look into your face, will know I look I mean. When the bus went by the image of that spring's first daisy stayed with me and would not give me rest until I had tried to capture it in words. The result was:

THE DAISIES' LAMENT

Spring skips across the earth,
And where her feet trip lightly on the sod
The daisies wake, and, shaking sleep
From out their eyes,
Look 'round in sudden, sad surprise;
And, listening, I hear their muted sighs,
'Once more, too late to see the face
Of God!'

When I read it to the family, they said, "Sort of hazy, isn't it? I don't quite understand it." But to me it was so clear—this early daisy awakened the *hand* of God, which man sometimes calls spring, but opening its eyes too late to see the *face* of God—that I have not yet been able to revise those lines to make them less hazy. Perhaps one day I may, but I know now that the "once more" must stay in. It is poignant testimony to the daisy's annual hope and its annual disappointment.

Some of us are like that daisy. We sense the nearness of God, feel his hand reaching us from spiritual sleep, but after we have rubbed sleep from our eyes we discover we are just too late to see his face; and we think, "Well, next time I'll wake up before he wakens me, and . . ." But next time it's the same story over again, and we say as the daisy did, "Once more too late!"

Now of course the daisy had a right to say that. Poor daisy, it was rooted in the ground; it couldn't run after spring, couldn't catch up with God as he strode across the earth waking other flowers! But we are not rooted—or at least need not be. If we feel the hand of God upon us, and wake too late to see his face, we can, if we will, run after him, catch hold of him, and wrestle with him, even as Jacob wrestled.

It may be that we too shall have to wrestle until the break of day. It may be that we too shall have to refuse to take the easy way out—the way of compromise—going the way Jehovah suggested in Genesis, the way of becoming God's wrestler, is

If we do, and we give up the struggle while yet it is dark, be very sure that when dawn breaks we shall not see God's face. But if we answer with Jacob, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," we too shall have our Peniel.

Six months before my experience with the daisy I had an experience which, as I look back upon it now, seems akin to Jacob's experience the night he was left alone and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. That experience, like the one with the daisy, would not give me rest until I had tried to capture it in words. The result was a grouping of verses I called at first "Growth," but which I now call,

PENIEL

There's a seed within the ground,
Struggling hard to free itself
From integument that bound;
Now, urged on by growth,
Integument must go;
Shoot of green must grope above,
Root must pierce below,
Strike out and hold,
Until some day from passer-by,
"Whence came this marigold?"

There's a bird within a cage
Beating hard to free itself,
Beating with instinctive rage
Against the binding bars.
Battered wing and bleeding beak
Soon tell the story of its flight
Through the door that proved too weak
To keep it day and night.

I, too, know that urge—
That "on, and up, and out beyond."
I live but to emerge
From my integument and bond.
From spirit's cage through battered door
I struggle but to struggle more;
And, travailing, I pray for strength
To reach new heights,
Until at length
I round the rock, push through the clod,
See light, am face to face with God.

The Lesson Illustrated

Susanna G. Fisher

REFINING THE DROSS

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven (Gen. 28:12).

In the vision of the opened heavens, the great truth of an ever-present God and of the possibility of unbroken communion with him, which needs no supernatural appearances and is not confined to moments when he "speaks," as he did to Abraham and is now doing to Jacob, are taught, not in dry abstraction, but in a form fitted for the spiritual state of the receiver. Jacob is summoned to take up by his own personal faith the hereditary blessing. "The God of Abraham and of Isaac" will be his God. The long-continued process of his education upward, from being a crafty supplanter to becoming God's wrestler, is

begun; and this patient training of an unworthy soul is a new revelation of the heart of God. His vow is tainted with selfishness, and has little of the full surrender that marked his grandfather's religion; but such as it is, God accepts it. The rest of Jacob's life is one long process of discipline refining the dross.—*Alexander Maclaren.*

NO FUNERAL COMING

And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee (Gen. 28:22).

A Negro preacher was in the habit of preaching much about giving. One day, after he had preached one of his characteristic sermons, a deacon came to him and said: "You is gwine to kill dis heah chu'ch if ye don't stop dis heah preachin' so much on gibbing. Dis chu'ch am gwine to gib itself to death." The preacher said in reply: "I'd go fudder to preach de funeral of dat chu'ch dan any chu'ch I noze, an' I'd take dis text, 'Blessed am de dead.'"

GOD OMNIPOTENT

I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father (Gen. 28:13).

Our God is omnipotent. There is an Eastern fable of a boy having challenged his teacher to prove the existence of God by working a miracle. The teacher procured a large vessel filled with earth, in which he deposited a kernel in the boy's presence, and bade him pay attention. In the place where the kernel was put a green shoot soon appeared. The shoot became a stem; the stem put forth leaves and branches, which soon spread over the whole apartment. It then budded with blossoms, which, dropping off, left golden fruit in their place, and in the short space of an hour there appeared a noble tree in the place of the seed. The youth, overcome with amazement, exclaimed, "Now I know there is a God, for I have seen his power!" The priest smiled at him, and said, "Simple child! do you only now believe? Does not what you have just seen take place in innumerable instances, year after year, only by a slower process? Is it the less wonderful on that account? He is the Lord and changes not, his mercy and power are ever the same."—*The Quiver.*

And he dreamed (Gen. 28:12).

Make my mortal dreams come true,
With the work I fain would do;
Clothe with life the weak intent,
Let me be the thing I meant;
Let me find in thy employ,
Peace that dearer is than joy.

—Whittier.

OUR power in prayer depends upon our life. Where our life is right, we shall know how to pray so as to please God, and prayer will secure the answer. The man who is ready to risk all for God can count upon God to do all for him.—*Andrew Murray.*

Order of Service

Prepared by NATHAN PIERCE, JR.

OPENING MUSIC. Piano, organ or orchestra.
The pieces should be spirited enough to quiet the confusion, but sufficiently sober to put those present in a worshipful mood.

PRAYER, preferably by the superintendent, followed by the Lord's Prayer (in unison).

HYMN. Suggested: "Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven"; "O Safe to the Rock"; "Still, Still with Thee."

RESPONSIVE READING. Parts of Psalm 91.

Superintendent. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

School. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Superintendent. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

School. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust:

Superintendent. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

School. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Superintendent. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness: nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

School. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation;

Superintendent. There shall be no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

School. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

Superintendent. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

School. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:

Superintendent. I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him.

School. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

HYMN. Suggested: "True-Hearted, Whole-Hearted, Faithful and Loyal"; "I Gave My Life for Thee"; "Dare to Be Brave, Dare to Be True"; "I Will Sing the Wondrous Story."

SCRIPTURE READING. Suggested: Psalm 84; or Hebrews 9:11-28; or John 4:13-26.

SPECIAL EXERCISES, such as Birthday Offering, Missionary, Evangelistic, or Temperance Talk.

HYMN. Suggested: "Dare to Be a Daniel, Dare to Stand Alone"; "Christian, Dost Thou See Them?"; "The Church's One Foundation."

PRAYER (by one of the teachers, or the pastor).

CLASS PERIOD.

CLOSING WORSHIP.

MUSIC, for reassembling of classes (dignified, but not too quiet).

SUPERINTENDENT'S FIVE MINUTES, for brief, stimulating reports, announcements, and, at least on some Sundays, an invitation to make the decision for Christ.

REPORTS OF SECRETARY (AND TREASURER).

HYMN. Suggested: "Marching with the Heroes"; "God of Our Fathers, Known of Old"; "Give of Your Best to the Master."

BENEDICTION. Mizpah, or Numbers 6:24-26 (in unison).

SUPPLIES FOR MOTHERS' DAY

Invitation Post-Cards

The use of post-cards sent out as an invitation to Mothers' Day services is becoming more popular each year. It is an inexpensive method of obtaining a large attendance to honor mother.



No. 789. This is a very attractive card that will be used in a large way by churches everywhere in connection with their Mothers' Day services. Handsomely photographed in colors with a fine Mothers' Day sentiment, and an invitation to the Mothers' Day service on the address side. **3 cents a dozen; \$1.25 a hundred.** (81 P)

Mothers' Day Souvenir

No. 774

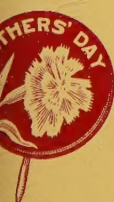
The design depicts the home, and the verses are typical of Mothers' Day. Suitable Bible verse is printed on back.



No. 774

There is a cord at the top for attaching a button or buttonhole. Size, 2 x 2 1/4 inches. **\$1.00 per hundred.** (81 P)

Mothers' Day Button



White or red carnation, green background, white lettering. **20 cents per dozen; \$1.50 per hundred.**

State how many of each are desired.



No. 418

Mothers' Day Bookmark

No. 418

A single design of sprays with a beautiful verse to mother is printed on this bookmark. Size, 5 1/4 inches long. Complete with tassel. **3 cents each.**

(81 P)

Greeting Cards and Booklets



No. 793

Mothers' Day Card.

No. 793. An exquisite design of a home in the distance with flowers of all kinds in the foreground, printed in full colors on heavy stock. To this is added a wonderful Mothers' Day sentiment. Size, 3 x 4 inches. **3 cents each,** with envelopes. (81 P)



No. 795

Mothers' Day Folder. No. 795.

This is an upright folder. The cover carries a design of the interior of mother's room with a greeting to mother. On the inside we have an unusually fine verse to mother, and also a Bible reference. Size, 3 x 4 inches closed. **3 cents each,** with envelope. (81 P)

GIFT-BOOKS

Bibles and Testaments

A Most Appropriate Gift for Mother

For information and prices see pages 106 to 126 of the 1937 Church and Sunday School Builder Catalog. If you do not have a copy we will gladly send you one upon receipt of your request.

Mothers of Famous Men

Archer Wallace

This book gives the life stories of the mothers of men who have achieved high place among their fellows. The quiet but powerful influence of a mother is the acknowledged source of the success of many a great man, and here we have true and intimate stories of the working of this power. Not only will this book give boys new ideas of life and its meaning; it will grip the attention of readers of all ages. **\$1.00.**

(30)

Streams in the Desert

Compiled by Mrs. Chas. E. Cowman

A book of daily meditations with a Bible verse and inspiring message for each day in the year. Cloth, **\$1.50.**

(88)

The Book of Daily Devotion

Compiled by

Elmer T. Clark and W. G. Cram

This book of devotional aids for the home, the church and its organizations, and Christians generally is a contribution to the worldwide attempt to cultivate a richer spirituality throughout Protestantism. It contains for each day of the year an appropriate Scripture reading, a choice poem, and a reverent, purposeful prayer. **\$1.50.** (101)

The World's Best Loved Poems

Compiled by James Gilchrist Lawson

Here in one volume are gathered the world's best-loved poems and prose selections, including famous old-time favorites and the best of current popular verse as well. Here are the masterpieces of renowned poets—poems which appeal to the human heart, giving you relaxation, inspiration, comfort, and enjoyment! Size, 5 1/2 x 8 3/8 x 1 1/2 inches. Substantially and attractively bound in art linen. Good paper, large, legible type. **\$1.00.** (30)

God and My Garden

Margaret E. Sangster

How a new design for living wove itself out of a garden set down in the midst of a modern city is the theme of this vivid book. The garden came to Margaret Sangster at a time of tragedy and in it day by day she came to possess a new sense of the essential goodness of life. **\$1.00.** (107)

And So He Made Mothers

Margaret Applegarth

This book will serve two purposes. First, it will provide teachers, ministers, leaders of young people's societies with material for Mothers' Day programs. Since very little collated and appropriate material is available for such programs, these thirty stories of mothers and plans for special exercises by a person of Miss Applegarth's competence ought to be widely welcomed. A second purpose of the book, accomplished largely by its attractive format as well as the sentiment it contains, is to serve as a gift to mothers. Illustrated, **\$1.50.** (30)

The Queenly Quest

Rosalee Mills Appleby

"This book from a literary point of view is exceptionally well done, and the themes and talks presented strive at once toward the main purpose of the book—the building of young womanhood. It is a book for girls themselves, for the mothers of girls and for those who would get new points of view, new channels of contact, and new ways of inspiring girlhood."—*Religious Telescope.* Cloth, **\$1.00.**

Mothers

Mrs. Laura Merrihew Adams

Biographical sketches of seventeen mothers who faced the difficult problems of their days and left an influence for good worthy of emulation. **\$1.25.** (3)

The Mother Heart

John T. Faris

A gift-book for mothers and a book of inspiration for sons and daughters. There probably never will be a more exquisite collection of tributes than this well-known editor and writer has gathered together in this beautiful little volume. Decorated boards. **50 cents.** (63)

THE AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

1701-1703 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

Ashburton Place, Boston
E. Randolph Street, Chicago
W. Third Street, Los Angeles

Order from Our Nearest House
Duty Extra in Canada

1107 McGee Street, Kansas City
505 Washington Mutual Bldg., Seattle
223 Church Street, Toronto

Tax Must be Added in States where Sales Tax is in Force

Children's Day

June 13, 1937

What will
YOUR CHURCH
do about it?



"The Greatest of These"

Our Children's Day service brings this year, through the children of our churches, a much-needed message of peace and good will. In dramatic story and pantomime it shows that Love, held captive by the forces of Hate, can only be set free as the children of the world come together in friendliness and love.

Sample Sent Upon Request

MAIL THIS COUPON

The American Baptist Publication Society

1701-1703 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

16 Ashburton Place, Boston
72 E. Randolph St., Chicago
313 W. Third St., Los Angeles

1107 McGee St., Kansas City
505 Washington Mutual Bldg., Seattle
223 Church St., Toronto

Mail to the Nearest Address

Gentlemen: Please send me a sample of the Children's Day service *The Greatest of These*.

Name _____

Address _____

A sample program has been mailed to every Baptist school. If you did not receive your copy fill in and mail the coupon below, and one will be sent to you.

Children's Day is The American Baptist Publication Society Day. It is the one day in the year when, by arrangement with the Northern Baptist Convention, church schools are asked to send their offerings to the Publication Society to help in its extensive program of missionary work and religious education. *All such offerings will be credited to the missionary quotas of the churches sending them.*

To those schools cooperating in this plan there will be supplied without charge a sufficient number of both participants' and congregational copies of the service, "The Greatest of These," together with a supply of offering envelopes.